

Hafa Adai!

NMBAC embarks anew on DC advocacy. **PAGE 2**
Girl Scouts sold a total of 3,000 boxes of cookies. **PAGE 3**

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New DPL regs for land leases

The Department of Public Lands has adopted revised regulations governing public land leases that will soon expire.

According to a DPL statement yesterday, these regulation changes comply with Public Law 20-84 that was signed into law by then-acting governor Victor Hocog last Dec. 31, 2018.

The new lease agreement terms for basic rent will be based on two new appraisals and require capital improvements or development on the property to be leased.

The new regulations were first proposed on Dec. 13, 2019, and aligns with P.L. 20-84, which was created to increase the term of public land leases from 25 years to 40 years with the

ON THE NET

- **P.L. 20-84:** http://camera-work/pdf/public_laws/20/pl20-84.pdf
- **DPL study:** http://cnmilaw.org/pdf/cnmiregister/2019_Volume_41/2019_Number_12.pdf

opportunity to extend up to 15 years for a total of 55 years.

It also allows DPL to negotiate a new lease with certain existing lessees that will soon be reaching the end of their 40 years or will exhaust their extension period, where they would become "matured leases." These leases must meet the criteria of Section 4 of P.L. 20-84, which includes that the public land lease has an existing school, religious organization, hotel, or golf resort on the property with five years left before the expiration of the lease term. Section 5 requires DPL to make a leasing

See DPL on Page 4



The Marianas High School mock trial team poses for a photo following their win last Friday at the NMI District Court.

KIMBERLY BAUTISTA

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The Marianas High School mock trial team successfully defended its title by bringing home the trophy at the 22nd Annual High School mock

WOMEN ACHIEVERS

March is International Women's Month. To mark this occasion, *Saipan Tribune* will be publishing this week, starting Monday and culminat-

trial competition last week and in the process becoming back-to-back champions.

The MHS mock trial team bested five other high schools and won their second mock trial competition, earning them another opportunity to

ing on Friday, a series of stories called "Women of Excellence."

There are many women achievers in the CNMI who deserve to be featured in this series but, unfortunately, we will be unable to feature them all due to the lack of space. What this series intends to pro-

represent their school and the entire CNMI at the upcoming statewide National Mock Trial competition in Indiana.

The Tinian Jr./Sr. High School won second place last Friday.

MHS topped Grace Christian Academy, Saipan International

See MHS on Page 4

vide a glimpse, in honor of the role these women play in holding up half the sky, in moving the Commonwealth forward.

Today, we focus on two women leaders in our community: Sami Birmingham-Babauta and Lyza Johnston. Read their stories on **PAGE 9**.

Customs shoots down rumor

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

The CNMI Division of Customs took to social media and other platforms yesterday in a bid to clear up unfounded rumors about shipping vessels being unable to enter the Commonwealth.

Jose C. Mafnas, director of the Division of Customs, said that despite the COVID-19 outbreak, they will

continue to assist progress of all trade at all ports of entries.

"Customs continues to facilitate trade at all the port of entries by conducting clearance on all ocean vessels, which includes the assessment of manifests and all documents on arriving vessels and cargos," he said.

Mafnas concedes that they do anticipate delays in the upcoming months because of COVID-19, but

See CUSTOMS on Page 4

INSIDE



BUSINESS

The price of oil has dropped precipitously as global demand weakens even further.

PAGE 13



NATION

Washington state officials said that a second person had died from the coronavirus.

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WORLD

British health authorities on Sunday confirmed 12 more cases of the new coronavirus.

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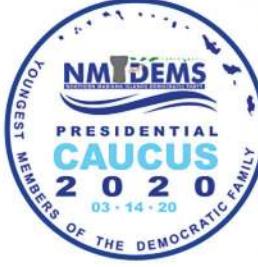


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Local

NMBAC embarks anew on DC advocacy

Members of the Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp. are calling on U.S. Congress to enact technical amendments to the Northern Mariana Islands U.S. Workforce Act (U.S. Public Law 115-218) to mitigate unintended harm to the CNMI economy.

In a series of meetings held with members of Congress and officials from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Labor, and the White House this month, NMBAC presented a list of issues requiring federal attention gathered from the experience of its members throughout the first year of implementation of P.L. 115-218.

According to NMBAC president Alex Sablan, the NMBAC is grateful for the opportunity to continue the important discussion about ensuring that this new transitional period best supports the needs of the U.S. workers in the community and does not cause undue harm to the overall economy.

"Following the enactment of the U.S. Workforce Act in 2018, we recognized the need

for continual dialogue on a number of key provisions of the law that created the possibility for overburdening employers within the economy and, more importantly, undermining the intents of the law which is to recruit, hire and train greater numbers of U.S. workers here," he said. "We are, of course, grateful for all the effort made to extend the transition period in 2018 and feel continued conversation about both statutory and regulatory language is an excellent example of how the private sector is willing to be active and considerate partners in this effort."

Technical amendments

NMBAC presented federal officials with a "white paper" that provided five recommendations for amendments to the Workforce Act, which included extending Temporary Labor Certification authority to the CNMI government by mirroring the structure present in Guam, allowing for calculated Prevailing Wages to be valid for a 24-month period in line with existing U.S. work visa requirements, allow for

numerical limits to adjust upward if the economy demands greater workers, repeal the exemption for construction workers under the CW-1 program, and repeal the "touchback" provision that requires a CW-1 permit holder to depart the CNMI for a 30-day period prior to the submission of their third renewal petition.

Sablan said the intent of this paper was to ensure members of Congress and the Trump administration understood the complete context of the CNMI's situation and our interest in seeing this program work.

"The CNMI economy and its labor force is experiencing one of the most turbulent periods in its recent history and it is important that Congress be made aware of the challenges our community is facing so that we can all work together to ensure the economy can eventually rebound," he said. "We feel that these requests both demonstrate a willingness to improve the program and prevent further harm from being inflicted onto our private sector at the time they are deeply struggling."

"Much of our conversations were highlighted by the current difficulties the CNMI economy is experiencing in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yutu and the outbreak of the coronavirus, which have greatly impacted businesses and our ability to create more opportunities of U.S. workers," he added.

During their door-knocking sessions on Capitol Hill, NMBAC members met with the Offices of Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Sen. Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT).

"We greatly appreciate the time that was provided to listen to the concerns of our community and to continue to this necessary discussion for success of our economy," Sablan said.

Meetings with fed officials

In addition to congressional office visits, NMBAC met with officials of the Trump administration to clarify and discuss regulations governing the implementation of the Workforce Act.

NMBAC members provided updates to federal officials on the status of the CNMI economy following the dramatic reduction in tourist arrivals caused by concerns over the outbreak of the coronavirus.

"It is important for our federal partners to know the severity of the impact this has on our economy," Sablan said. "We are an economy based on tourism without the tourists needed to sustain our industry."

The effects of the coronavirus outbreak on the workforce was a key discussion with officials of the U.S. Department of Labor as clarification was requested on the ability for employers to reduce work hours of CW-1 employees required

during the downturn in arrivals.

Under regulations published by the department, employers must ensure three-fourths or 75% of the annual contract hours to their CW-1 employees and U.S. workers employed in equivalent positions. Labor officials clarified that the three-fourths requirement pertains to maintaining 75% of total annual hours during the contract period, which incorporate regular, overtime, holiday and paid leave hours already encumbered under the current contract.

"This was a necessary clarification as employers are seeing a need to reduce hours but are interested in making this business decision in line with the requirements of U.S. Labor," Sablan said.

NMBAC also discussed the implementation of the application process for the additional 3,000 construction workers provided by the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (U.S. Public Law 116-94). NMBAC members sought clarification in how the department would determine the association between labor certification applications with projects related to the recovery from a presidentially declared major disaster or emergency.

Under the law, CW-1 permits are authorized for construction occupations so long as the individuals were employed in the service of a contract or subcontract for construction, repairs, renovations, or facility services directly connected to, or associated with, recovery from a federally declared disaster.

The conversations were productive, and we were assured the department is working toward the imminent publication of these regulations," he added.

Members of the NMBAC attending these meetings included Velma Palacios, president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce; Gloria Cavanagh, president of the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands; and Catherine Cachero, chapter president of the Society for Human Resource Management. (PR)

"One important provision of the Workforce Act is the creation of a CW-1 permit that is valid for a three-year period, if the employee has met certain requirements," Sablan said. "As we are coming up to the first implementation of the touchback provision, having the regulations and the process for applying for this three-year permit will ease the impact of a mass outflow of nearly half our CW-1 workforce and allow for businesses to avoid closure following the prolonged absence of the majority of their employees."

"The conversations were productive, and we were assured the department is working toward the imminent publication of these regulations," he added.

Members of the NMBAC attending these meetings included Velma Palacios, president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce; Gloria Cavanagh, president of the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands; and Catherine Cachero, chapter president of the Society for Human Resource Management. (PR)

NMC GOLF FUNDRAISER

(INMC)

The Northern Marianas College Foundation Golf Tournament will help raise funds for the college's typhoon recovery efforts. This year's tournament will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2020 at the Laolao Bay Golf and Resort.

First place winners in the men's Championship, A, B, C, Senior, and Ladies Flights will each receive \$500, while \$300 and \$200 will go to the second and third place finishers, respectively. Hole-in-one prizes include a 2020 Kia Soul from Joeten Motors, and two \$5,000 hole-in-one prizes from McDonald's and Pacifica Insurance. The tournament will also feature many other items such as raffle prizes like smartphones, hotel stays, meals, and much more. For more information, visit www.marianas.edu or call 237-6833.



Girl Scouts sold a total of 3,000 boxes of cookies

The Northern Marianas Island Girl Scouts successfully sold 3,000 boxes of cookies, with only a few cases left, at their cookie sale throughout the month of February.

NMI Girl Scouts president and chair Tania David thanked Joeten supermarkets and the Joeten Superstore for giving the troops space to learn and grow

from the Girl Scout cookie sales program. David added that because of their generous community partners, the last few cases are now being bought.

"Our Girl Scouts did phenomenal for the first ever Girl Scout Cookie Season in the CNMI," said David. "We are super proud of them, their parents, families, and friends for

being the biggest supporters."

The Girl Scout Cookie Season from February to March is the largest event the Girl Scouts organization has each year. It is intended to provide the younger girls in the Girl Scouts the ability to learn about business and leadership experience through the world's largest girl-led orga-

nization, and according to David, the troops have exceeded her expectations.

The Girl Scouts joined the Women's Affairs Office and Commonwealth Women's Association for the proclamation of Women's Month and to have a proclamation of their own, during which they declared Girl Scout Week and Girl Scout Month. David affirmed that the troops will

be participating in activities throughout Girl Scout Week that starts from March 8 to March 12. March 12 is Girl Scout Day; it will be the organization's 108th birthday.

"Thank you to the Women's Affairs Office and Commonwealth Women's Association for including us [Girl Scouts] in the CNMI Women's Month celebrations," said David.

David encouraged commu-

nity partners to share a troop activity that the Girl Scouts could do and learn from. Email nmigirlscout@gmail.com if you would like to share a skill, service or learning experience with the troops.

If you are interested in letting your child enroll into the Girl Scouts, there is an ongoing early registration for current girl scout members in April. Dates and details will be available soon for new girl scout members. Girl Scout dues are \$45 per year, which translates to only \$3.75 per month for all those events and activities. Plus, parent volunteering is a great way to show support for both your girl scout and community at only \$25 per year. Follow them @nmigirlscouts on Instagram and www.facebook.com/nmigirlscouts. (*Justine Nauta*)

OAG grants 'use immunity' to four of Atalig's 7 co-defendants in NMI case

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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 REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General has agreed to grant "use immunity" to four of seven co-defendants of Rota Mayor Efraim M. Atalig in the Superior Court case.

As this developed, assistant U.S. attorney Eric O'Malley, counsel for the U.S. government, informed the U.S. District Court for the NMI yesterday that he is working on extending "use immunity" to Atalig's seven co-defendants in Superior Court who are not indicted in federal court.

O'Malley said it is unclear, however, whether this requires approval from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Enforcement Operations and, if so, whether it will be approved.

O'Malley also stated that his research suggests that im-

munity granted by the CNMI prosecution would bind the U.S. government.

Chief prosecutor John Bradley told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that "use immunity" refers to protection given the witness from having their testimony used against them.

"Witness can still be prosecuted, just with evidence other than their testimony. Witness also can still be prosecuted for perjury if a witness lies during testimony," Bradley said.

Transactional immunity, on the other hand, protects the witness from being prosecuted for a particular crime.

The chief prosecutor said Atalig's four witnesses were offered "use immunity" and not transactional immunity.

Bradley said that, once the Superior Court approves the "use immunity" offer, witnesses can't refuse to testify

by invoking their constitutional privilege against self-incrimination.

The four co-defendants are Dean Manglona, Eusebio Manglona, Josepha Manglona, and Dennis Mendiola. They have not resolved their cases.

Last Friday, assistant attorney general Erin Toolan, counsel for the CNMI government, informed the Superior Court that they agree to grant "use immunity" to the four co-defendants "in the interest of justice and to avoid further delay of both the federal and CNMI trials.

The bench trial in the Superior Court case is currently set for March 30, while the jury trial in the U.S. District Court case is set for March 10.

In the Superior Court case, three other co-defendants—Vanessa Charfauros, Magdalena Mesngon, and Dexter

Apatang—have already disposed of their cases by plea agreement.

Toolan said that, as a term of their agreements, the three agreed to cooperate with the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the U.S. Attorney and testify in both local and federal trials.

Toolan said that, per the agreements, the three defendants were granted immunity from the CNMI government related to this incident.

Toolan was in the District Court yesterday to observe the hearing on Mayor Atalig's motion to continue the trial of his case until the related criminal case pending before the Superior Court is resolved as to his seven co-defendants.

David G. Banes, counsel for Mayor Atalig, informed the court that, with O'Malley stating his intent to grant "use

immunity" before the CNMI case is resolved, it may render their motion for continuance unnecessary.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona will hold a pre-trial hearing tomorrow, Wednesday, at 1:30pm.

In the federal court case, the charges against Efraim and Evelyn Atalig involve at least eight trips taken by the couple at different times in 2018 to Guam, Palau, the U.S. mainland, South Korea, and Saipan.

The Ataligs are being charged jointly with wire fraud, theft concerning programs involving federal funds, and conspiracy to commit wire fraud and federal funds theft.

In the Superior Court case, the OAG charged Mayor Atalig and the seven co-defendants with misconduct in public office.

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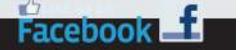
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Woman hunted for allegedly stealing from parents falls

Manuela Johnson Guerrero, a 40-year-old woman hunted by police for allegedly stealing assorted jewelry, a laptop, and rods and reel belonging to her parents, was arrested in Susupe last Sunday.

Guerrero was taken before Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo for bail hearing for theft.

Guerrero was released upon her promise to appear in all scheduled hearing plus other terms and conditions.

According to police detective Eu-

gene O. Dillay, last Feb. 20, a couple showed up at the Department of Public Safety's front desk to file a theft complaint against their daughter, Guerrero.

Dillay said the couple stated that they went on vacation from Jan. 24 to Feb. 20, 2020, and had their daughter watch over their house in Susupe

while they were off-island.

When the couple arrived back on Saipan, their daughter was avoiding them. The daughter then allegedly confessed that she took the assorted jewelry and laptop and pawned them. She gave the receipts to her parents.

She also admitted to have taken three rods and reel.

The total value of the assorted jewelry and laptop was \$25,000, while it was \$3,500 for the three rods and reel.

The father was able to recover the three rods and reel from a store. Detectives subsequently recovered the assorted jewelry and the laptop from several pawnshops. (*Ferdie de la Torre*)

DPL

From Page 1

decision prior to the end of the lease and create a public notice of intent to renew providing for public comment and hearings.

The goal of P.L. 20-84 was to stimulate economic growth and development by providing a longer lease term with a possible extension and incentivizes longstanding investors to continue their lease by being able to negotiate a new lease before their current lease expires and encourages new upgrades to the facility before expiration without having to bid their proposal against other companies under a request for proposal.

DPL proposed the amendments to the regulations to address the concerns of hoteliers who will soon face the reality of their matured leases criteria under P.L. 20-84. The upcoming 40-year leases that will expire are Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan in June 2021 and Hyatt Regency Saipan in December 2021. Both have expressed an interest in continuing as lessees.

DPL collects two types of rent for all leases annually:

1. Basic Rent: A flat-rate rent based on a percentage of the Fair Market Value for the fee simple appraisal of the raw land with improvements; and

2. Business Gross Receipts: A fluctuating value based on a percentage of revenue that is made on public land.

DPL's regulation for basic rent states, "Basic rent shall be based on the value of the fee simple title to the property. It is the policy of DPL to collect at least 5% of a property's value each year for the term of the lease as base rent." The issue is that all current lessees' basic rent values were determined decades prior based on their original appraisal of raw land. Now these same leases are expected to pay the rate of 5% of FMV on the current appraised land with 40 years or more of improvements.

After P.L. 20-84 was passed and DPL became capable of negotiating five years early, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands wrote to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres on March 12, 2019, on behalf of these hotels to discuss options to reduce the 5% of FMV to calculate basic rent for matured leases. They said it was not fiscally viable for either Hyatt or Fiesta to pay 5% of FMV with improvements annually with BGR and execute much needed improvements.

In order to analyze their claims and determine a feasible basic rent value to charge for matured leases, DPL conducted an internal study of rent analysis led by the DPL internal auditor and supported by DPL's financial management adviser, compliance director, and real estate director. The study was conducted to review DPL's current regulations on determining rent, to analyze the hotel occupancy rates, and contrast with historical financial statements and budget as well as audited financial statutes from Hyatt and Fi-

esta from the last 15 years. DPL used market scenarios from neighboring islands such as Guam, Palau, and Hawaii and recognized that leases in the CNMI must comply with Article 11 of the CNMI Constitution.

As indicated in the study, DPL currently collects a flat rate of \$25,000 a year in basic rent from Hyatt, based on its initial fee simple appraisal and collects approximately \$300,000 a year in total when BGR is included. Basic rent alone for Fiesta is currently at \$10,000. These values were embedded since the beginning of their 40-year agreements and cannot be changed for the remainder of the lease terms. However, based on the current appraisals assessed for its matured lease, basic rent alone based on 5% of FMV would cost Hyatt \$250,000 a month. Although there is a substantial need to increase collection, the current regulation would upsurge rent from \$25,000 a year for the past 40 years to \$250,000 a month the following year. This does not include BGR or cost of improvements. Without an amendment, this trend will continue for all public land leases reaching maturity, including schools and religious organizations and will deter the interest of established investors from creating new leases.

The study was conducted over seven weeks and resulted in projections and analysis for different rental rates and different BGRs. DPL met with the Northern Marianas Descent Corp. on Sept. 4, 2019, to discuss DPL matters, including the hotel leases and explained that DPL will be commissioning an internal study to review current rental rates, previous hotel occupancy rates and past rental to make an informed decision. DPL met with Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios on Oct. 17, 2019, to discuss HANMI's letter and the internal study's scenarios. DPL met with HANMI on Oct. 24, 2019, to discuss the regulations and the plans for the internal study. DPL also worked with an internal panel on Nov. 21, 2019. The proposed study and the criteria to be analyzed was presented to the DPL Public Lands

Advisory Board on Nov. 26, 2019, and the PLAB approved the study. DPL also informed several members of the Legislature about the findings and different basic rent options before publishing the proposal on the *Commonwealth Register*.

The DPL proposed amendments and the DPL internal study for rent analysis were published in the December 2019 *Commonwealth Register*. The amendment proposes a reduction of percentage of FMV from "5%" to "up to 3%" to account for the necessity of capital improvements needed for structures 40 years or older and to account that the fee simple appraisal on raw land with improvements. All CNMI public land leases are appraised on a fee simple title to the property because the value does not diminish over time, ensuring that DPL stands to consistently collect the best possible value from the leases for NMDs for years to come. Some legislators questioned DPL's position of fee simple; however, we hold firm that it is the highest consistent value compared to a leasehold value.

DPL received three letters on the proposed regulations during the 30-day comment period established by the CNMI Revision Commission, two in support and one opposed. Taking the written comments and other feedback into account, DPL has made some changes to the proposal to clarify terms and to include a formula that explains not only the reduction to "up to 3%" but exemplifies how we would determine the FMV percentage by calculating a lessee's investment of capital improvements and the cost to replace or upgrade existing improvements. The considerations of levels of improvements allow for more informed lease negotiations and a sustainable basic rent so that these improvements can take place. Under NMIAC § 145-70-301 article, the percentage of FMV can increase over time if established in the initial lease agreement, but it cannot decrease during the lease agreement term. Article 6 also indicates that if the FMV is lower than the previous five years, DPL will use the higher rate.

Formula	(Level of Improvements)	Basic Rate	Result
(1 - Cost Proposed for Capital Improvements Replacement Cost for Existing Improvements)	x 3% = Rent Rate		
EXAMPLE:			
(1 - 15,000,000 50,000,000)	x 3% = 2.10%		
0.70	x 3% = 2.10%		
Table Illustration	Cost Proposed for Capital Improvements		
	Replacement Cost for Existing Improvements		
1- 0.00%	1.00	x 3% = 3.00%	
1- 5.00%	0.95	x 3% = 2.85%	
1- 10.00%	0.90	x 3% = 2.70%	
1- 15.00%	0.85	x 3% = 2.55%	
1- 20.00%	0.80	x 3% = 2.40%	
1- 25.00%	0.75	x 3% = 2.25%	
1- 30.00%	0.70	x 3% = 2.10%	
1- 35.00%	0.65	x 3% = 1.95%	
1- 40.00%	0.60	x 3% = 1.80%	
1- 45.00%	0.55	x 3% = 1.65%	
1- 50.00%	0.50	x 3% = 1.50%	

It is important to note that, although DPL is allowed to enter into negotiations with lessees prior to the maturity of their leases, the lessee is still required to submit a proposal based on two appraisals. Once the appraisals have been submitted, reviewed and approved, DPL is still required under P.L. 15-2 to post a Notice of Intent to Lease. This notice is published in all required public spaces and advertised for all other interested investors to see, similar to RPFs. Under a Notice of Intent, all other interested investors are not

only given the opportunity to submit their own proposal for the property but are able to see the full proposal of the current lessee. Interested investors can compare their proposal to all of the current lessee's financial history, their appraisals, and their plans for improvement. This does not happen during an RFP. If another investor submits their own proposal, under the P.L. 15-2, DPL must cease all negotiation with the current lessee and review the new proposal to decide what is the best and most profitable offer.

For clarity and contrary to a recent public meeting, DPL has not finalized lease negotiations with either Fiesta or Hyatt and has not published an intent to lease for either hotel. As of Feb. 25, 2020, Fiesta Resort officially submitted a proposal to DPL and the proposal is currently under review. To date, Hyatt Regency has

not officially turned in a proposal.

The adoption for matured leases was submitted to the Office of the Attorney General and was adopted on Feb. 18, 2020. The approved adoption is available in the February 2020 *Commonwealth Register*. The DPL Real Estate Division is also undergoing a full assessment of all DPL regulations concerning leases and lease agreements including, but not limited to, personal guarantor requirements, general commercial liability and public benefits to be proposed at a later date.

DPL continues to comply with all constitutional mandates, including remitting the highest amount of funds to the Marianas Public Land Trust in its history. Article 11 of the CNMI Constitution mandates that all revenue from public land leases are remitted to MPLT minus operational expenditures. For more information regarding matured leases or our internal study of rent analysis, DPL can also be reached at (670) 234-3751 and is located on the second floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building. You may also visit www.dpl.gov.mp or its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/DPLCNMI. For a copy of all of DPL's public land list of lessees, the DPL annual report can be found at <https://www.dpl.gov.mp/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Department-of-Public-Lands-Annual-Report-2019-1.pdf>. (PR)

CUSTOMS

From Page 1

there is no reason for panic-buys.

Mafnas stated that although shipments are steady, the CNMI needs to be realistic and the impact of the coronavirus is uncertain and for everyone to be prepared for the upcoming months.

On Saipan, there was a rumor going around that some stores have run out of butane gas and noodles, thinking it could be COVID-19-related. When asked about this, a Joeten supermarket supervisor, who wishes to remain anonymous, was quick to shoot that down, saying it's just part of their weekly sale. She added that butane is always on sale for \$2.99 every week.

A 99 Cent Supermarket manager was also quick to clarify that their

increased sales is because it was payday and not COVID-19 related.

Within the past decade, the CNMI has been at risk for many diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, dengue fever, and now COVID-19, which has prompted the suspension of China flights to and from the CNMI.

In 2002-2003, the CNMI faced a similar threat with SARS, which also caused an accelerated drop in tourism numbers. In 2005, the CNMI was vulnerable to the bird flu virus that affected most of the Southeast Asian countries which, yet again, caused the island to be on the front row of defense from the then-potential epidemic. Ten years later, in 2015, the CNMI faced another infectious outbreak which was the Ebola virus and the Middle Eastern coronavirus, MERS-CoV.

nor. The fact pattern presents an officer entering a classroom and requesting the minor to hand over his backpack. In doing so, the officer pepper sprays the minor and subsequently brings the minor to the principal's office. Prior to this, the officer received a report from another student that he had seen the minor with a gun.

The MHS mock trial team will travel to Evansville, Indiana in May to participate in their second statewide national mock trial competition.

The mock trial's focus this year was the fictitious case of *Gabriel Johnson Torres v. the Department of Public Safety*. The problem focuses on an excessive force claim by a police officer against a mi-

School, Mount Carmel School, and Kagman High School on its way to the top of the podium.

The MHS mock trial team will travel to Evansville, Indiana in May to participate in their second statewide national mock trial competition.

MHS played the role of defense during the championship round, while Tinian High School played the role of prosecutor.

The best prosecution attorney award was given to Tinian High's Tasi Long.



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Sablan to administration: Collect \$37M from IPI

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives minority bloc has filed yet another Open Government Act request to the Office of the Governor, this time for records on the Community Benefit Fund that the casino operator is required by law to finance.

In a letter dated Feb. 28, 2020, addressed to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, the minority bloc requested access to inspect

and/or copy all records related to the CBF obligations of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC that are in the possession, custody, or control of the Office of the Governor.

The minority also wants records on IPI's compliance with Section 16 of the Casino License Agreement.

IPI was required by the

» Minority bloc files OGA request for CBF records

casino license agreement to pay out \$20 million in 2018 and another \$20 million on or before Oct 1, 2019, for programs in health care, education, scholarships, infrastructure, or employee retirement benefits, said minority member Rep. Tina Sablan (Ind-Saipan) in an interview.

IPI, according to the CLA, must distribute monies from

the CBF in consultation with the Office of the Governor to support programs such as education, scholarships, health care, employee retirement benefits, and infrastructure.

"Given the economic crisis we face, the projected revenue shortfall of more than \$40 million this fiscal year, and the disruptions to essential public services that we expect, it should be an urgent priority of this administration to collect on that \$37 million, not

to mention the many millions in taxes still owed by IPI," Sablan said. "The audited financial statement as of Dec. 31, 2018, indicates IPI has only paid out \$3 million, and we want to know who has benefited from these funds, and what actions the governor has taken to enforce this part of the license agreement."

Sablan also said that neither the Commonwealth Lottery Commission nor the Commonwealth Casino Commission

seem willing or able to speak to the enforcement issue, and that both have pointed to the authority of the governor to compel IPI to comply with this contractual obligation.

The minority bloc expects the documents to be ready for review on or before the expiration of the 10-day response period required by OGA.

"If the administration cannot or will not take action to hold IPI accountable to the license or the tax laws of the Commonwealth, we need to know that, and we need to know why," Sablan said.



DETAIL TINIAN

Equipment Operator 2nd Class Scott Valente, deployed with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5's Detail Tinian, oversees the offload of civil engineering support equipment during Detail Tinian's embarkation to the island for future projects. NMCB-5 is deployed across the Indo-Pacific region conducting high-quality construction to support U.S. and partner nations to strengthen partnerships, deter aggression, and enable expeditionary logistics and naval power projection.

U.S. NAVY/LT. PATRICK DANIEL

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-20-014

LEASE OF OFFICE AND OPERATIONS SUPPORT FACILITY FOR CUC ROTA ADMINISTRATION & OPERATION

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease of a suitable office and operations support facility for the Headquarters of CUC's Administration and Operations on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA), DPW, OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The IFB package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package will be emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. Prospective Proposers for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division to be considered. For registration inquiries, please email Christie Sablan, CUC Purchasing Technician, Senior via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-20-014, Lease of Office and Operations support facility for CUC Rota Administration and Operation." to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 23, 2020** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on March 7, 2020** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to William Gilmore, CUC Deputy Director via email address william.gilmore@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan, CUC P&S, Purchasing Technician, Senior christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-19-028, REV.1

REPLACEMENT OF SADOG TASI WWTP CLARIFIER

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Replacement of Sadog Tasi Clarifier Replacement in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The intent of the contract is for the Contractor to provide all labor, equipment, supplies and materials necessary to complete the scope of work which consists of installation of a new circular clarifier mechanism and replacement or repair of the effluent launder box; removal of the old circular clarifier mechanism and sections of the effluent launder box; replacement of the RPP weirs and scum baffle, installation of a new outer scum baffle; installation of new area lighting, wires, and conduit, and disconnect boxes; installation of a new process water spray system for foam control. The work shall include the dewatering and cleaning of aeration basin #3 and the clarifier; routing process flow and maintaining conditions during the construction period; and returning process flow from the aeration basin to the clarifier. The work shall be completed with minimal disruption to the daily operation of the Sadog Tasi Waste Water Treatment Plant. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 365 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **\$100.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **March 12, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) Original and Five (5) Hard Copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-19-028, Rev.1 Replacement of the Sadog Tasi Clarifier" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) April 2, 2020**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or otherwise secured in a manner satisfactory to CUC, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract. All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (ChST) on March 16, 2020** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Officer via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Christie Sablan, CUC P&S, Purchasing Technician, Senior via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN, JR.
Purchasing Administrator

NMI Democratic Party presidential caucus on March 14

The NMI Democratic Party will host its 2nd Presidential Caucus on the islands Saipan, Tinian, and Rota on March 14, 2020, with the designated times and venues to be announced later. However, all NMI registered voters who want to register as members of the party are welcome and encouraged to participate.

Registered voters and persons who will be eligible to vote on or before Nov 3, 2020 on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota will be able to visit the designated voting sites and cast votes for their Democratic presidential candidate of choice.

"We are excited to host this

historic event with the people of the CNMI and although we cannot vote for President, we do have a vote on the presidential nominee and it is important that we participate in the process," said NMI Democratic Party chair Nola Kileman Hix.

"We need to show up, and make our votes count as I am confident that the next Democratic President of the United States will bring our divided country together while working to restore integrity to all branches of the oval office," added Hix.

As of Feb. 28, the five Democratic presidential candidates who qualify for the NMI pres-

idential caucus ballot are: former vice president Joe Biden, former New York City mayor Mike Bloomberg; Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota; Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont; and Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.

Candidates Deval Patrick, Andrew Yang, Tom Steyer, and Pete Buttigieg qualified for the ballot by petition, but each have since suspended their campaign and will no longer be on the ballot.

Super Tuesday is tomorrow in the United States and it accounts for the largest percentage of delegate votes needed

to secure the presidential nomination. For the five territories and non-states, American Samoa and Democrats Abroad are part of Super Tuesday, followed by the CNMI on March 14, Puerto Rico on March 29, Guam on May 2, and the Virgin Islands on June 6.

"We went from 20-plus Democratic presidential candidates and now to five. Although it's nice to have options it will be interesting to see how this plays out, who will be next to drop-out of the race, and if and when former candidates will endorse a current candidate,"

said NMI Democratic Party member Edith Deleon Guerrero. "We can't afford to get this wrong and we look forward to seeing a 'blue wave' nationally and locally here in the Marianas."

This week the NMI Democratic Party will be announcing the designated times, and locations for the March 14 Democratic presidential cau-

cuses to be held on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. All persons interested to become delegates to the 2020 Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee Wisconsin, pledged to any of the presidential candidates should visit www.nmidems.org to receive a delegate candidacy form and submit their candidacy on or before March 8, 2020. (PR)

Census interviews start

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Expect the CNMI Census to knock on your door any time now.

The CNMI Census officially started "the count" following the launch of the 2020 Census Enumeration Phase last March 1 on Tinian and March 2 on Saipan.

Essentially the "count," the Enumeration Phase is when the community should start seeing CNMI Census workers, in uniform and with two ID badges, going door to door to do interviews in every household.

The 2020 Census' goal is to count everyone once, only once.

"We do want to make sure that we count everybody—newborn babies, older people, relatives living with you. If you have a border or renters living in your home, everybody in the household needs to be counted," said U.S. Census adviser Colleen Joyce.

The enumerators will introduce themselves, show their badge, give a confidentiality notice, and then conduct the actual interview.

"They'll introduce themselves, they'll show you their badge, they'll hand your confidentiality notice, which assures you that all the information you give them is confidential. Then, they will go into the actual interview," Joyce said.

An interview would take an average of about 45 minutes per household, depending on the number of people residing in the house.

There are over 200 Census enumerators in the field, spread all over the islands, who would be conducting interviews until May 30, 2020. Follow-up interviews will take place until June 30.

To ensure language accessibility, Census also hired interpreters who know Chinese,

Korean, Japanese, and Bengali, on top of the enumerators who are versed in Chamorro, Carolinian, English, and Tagalog.

The translators, like the enumerators, went through the 16-hour basic training, and have also sworn to protect confidentiality of the information they will be receiving.

Furthermore, Census also wants to make the interview process convenient for everyone. Appointments are allowed in cases of missed or unfinished interviews, or, when translator services are needed.

"Our enumerators are trained. Allow them to work with you in interviewing you in the right time that's convenient for you and your family," Census manager Claudio K. Norita said.

Census stresses that everyone in the CNMI needs to be counted.

"These numbers determine billions of dollars on how federal funding is distributed. The information Census we gather about the households is used to determine different federal programs and used by the CNMI government as well to plan things," Joyce said.

"HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] uses our data, FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] will use our data, Health and Human Services, at the federal level, they all use our data to determine communities and what their needs are and to decide where to implement their programs, as well as the funding."

The U.S. Constitution mandates that a census of the population be conducted every 10 years. Census statistics are used to determine the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives and inform how billions of dollars of federal funds will be allocated by state, local, and federal lawmakers every year for the next 10 years.

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

Happy birthday shoutout goes out to Farrah Borja, who is celebrating her 36th birthday! May the Lord continue to bless you on your special day and every birthday! We love you! Greetings come from your family.

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CUC urged to give customers more time to pay bills

Sen. Teresita A. Santos (Ind-Rota) has recommended that the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. give CUC customers more time to pay their utility bills beyond their due date, as a form of consideration in light of the financial instability the CNMI is facing.

In a letter to CUC executive director Gary P. Camacho, Santos highlighted the dire employment situation of people of the CNMI, with work hour reduction in both the public and private sectors.

"The continued loss of our Asian tourism market and not knowing how soon it will bounce back has left many of our people in the midst of a financial crisis that will leave many unable to make their monthly payments," Santos said in a letter to Camacho.

The senator also pointed out that most families are still recovering from the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yutu.

"With the recent announcement that government employees are facing a biweekly 64-hour government work

schedule, austerity implementation will further exacerbate the financial capabil-

ity of most families in the CNMI to purchase basic necessities as well as pay loans,

mortgages and other debts that they may owe."

"Under these dire circum-

stances, quite a good number of our people would find it a lot more difficult to make ends

meet on a timely basis, including utility bills," Santos said. "Such accommodation is a form of assistance for the multitude struggling to meet obligations." **(Iva Maurin)**

\$1.8M exposure for Marianas via 'Creators Camp'



Five young moviemakers and five popular Instagrammers from Japan visit Hyatt Regency Saipan in February 2020 as part of the "Creators Camp in Saipan" organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority and Tabippo.net.



Young moviemakers and popular Instagrammers from Japan visit The Shack on Saipan on Feb. 15, 2020, as part of the "Creators Camp in Saipan" organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority and Tabippo.net. **MVA**

was held on Feb. 15-16, 2020, with five young moviemakers and five popular Instagrammers creating original content in the Marianas. Tabippo.net is publishing three articles on the Marianas and the camp, targeting its 2 million monthly

online users, 34,000 Instagram followers, and 58,000 Twitter followers interested in active travel, photography, and creative work. The content was also posted to the artists' and Instagrammers' social media.

"The timing of 'Creators Camp in Saipan' is perfect as we aim to maintain—if not increase—our number of visitors from Japan," said MVA managing director Priscilla M. Iakopo. "This camp is also a strategic use of our funding.

Tabippo.net primarily targets active travelers in their late teens to 30s, and we expect the quality content created during the camp to generate a lot of online buzz about the Marianas through both Tabippo.net and the creators, themselves, who were chosen for their artistic abilities and large social media following."

Activities included snorkeling at Grotto, an off-road buggy tour with Marianas

Trekking, filming at Micro Beach, parasailing and snorkeling at Managaha, lunch at The Shack, windsurfing, sunset barbecue dinner at Aqua Resort Club, hiking to Forbidden Island, lunch at Surf Club, beach yoga, lunch at Loco Taco, and filming at Hyatt Regency Saipan. The group lodged at G.T. Guest House and Hyatt Regency Saipan.

Some of the original movies will also be displayed by the MVA at select Tokyo train station digital advertising sites in the spring. **(MVA)**

Young moviemakers and popular Instagrammers from Japan practice yoga on the beach on Feb. 16, 2020, as part of the "Creators Camp in Saipan" organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority and Tabippo.net. **MVA**

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(Saipan)
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SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MARCH 11, 2020 TIME: 10:00 AM

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INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)/INVITATION TO BID (ITB) FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.GOV.MP]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO RFP's TAB ON THE BOTTOM NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP/ITB. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORAZON P. ADA
CHCC DIRECTOR OF P&S



COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

San Jose Village P.O. Box 502149, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. Nos: (670) 234-7145/7146/6293/6245
Fax No.: (670) 235-7147
Website: www.developcnmi.com



PUBLIC NOTICE

March 3, 2020

PURSUANT TO PUBLIC LAW 8-41, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION DIVISION (DCD) OF THE COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CDA) THRU ITS CHAIRMAN HEREBY INFORMS THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE DCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL HOLD ITS REGULAR MEETING ON SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2020 AT 9:30 A.M. THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CDA CONFERENCE ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CDA BUILDING, SAN JOSE VILLAGE, SAIPAN. THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

AGENDA

- I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
 - A. Roll Call
 - B. Adoption of Agenda
 - C. Adoption of Minutes
 - 1. January 23, 2020
- II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- III. REPORTS
 - A. Executive Director's /Loan Manager's Report
 - B. DCD Funds' Status Report
- IV. OLD BUSINESS
- V. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. New Loan Applications
 - B. Loan Revision Requests
- VI. OTHER MATTERS
- VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION
- VIII. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. (Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a)(7) and Section 1(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/FRANK LEE SN. BORJA
Chairman, DCD Board of Directors

COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

San Jose Village P.O. Box 502149, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. Nos: (670) 234-7145/7146/6293/6245
Fax No.: (670) 235-7147
Website: www.developcnmi.com



PUBLIC NOTICE

March 3, 2020

PURSUANT TO PUBLIC LAW 8-41, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CDA) THRU ITS CHAIRMAN, HEREBY INFORMS THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE CDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REGULAR MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2020 IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING. THE DCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING COMMENCES AT 9:30 A.M. THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CDA CONFERENCE ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CDA BUILDING, SAN JOSE VILLAGE, SAIPAN. THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

AGENDA

- I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
 - A. Roll Call
 - B. Election of Vice-Chairperson
 - C. Adoption of Agenda
 - D. Adoption of Minutes
 - 1. January 24, 2020
- II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- III. REPORTS
 - A. Executive Director's Report
 - 1. Accomplishments' Report
 - 2. Administrative/Personnel Matters
 - a. Contract Renewal
 - b. FY 2021 Budget
 - 3. Loan Matters
 - a. Loan Proposal
 - b. Qualifying Certificate (QC) Program Matters/Economic Development Activities Comptroller's Report
 - B. OLD BUSINESS
 - A. Rent-To-Own Home Program
 - B. Article XII (Private Land Only)
 - C. Update Loan Department Page on the CDA Website
 - D. Doing Business in the CNMI
 - C. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. Amendments to the DCD Rules & Regulations
 - B. Legal Service – Attorney General's Office
 - C. CPA Proposed Financing
 - D. OTHER MATTERS
 - E. EXECUTIVE SESSION
 - F. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. (Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/ IGNACIO L. PEREZ
Chairman, CDA Board of Directors



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

P.O. BOX 501370 SAIPAN, MP 96950



PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910(a), the Sixteenth CNMI State Board of Education hereby gives notice that there will be an Emergency Special Board Meeting on Wednesday, March 4, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. at the Board of Education Conference Room, Building 1241, Capitol Hill, Saipan.

AGENDA¹

- I. Preliminary
 - 1. Call to Order
 - 2. Roll Call
 - 3. Adoption of Agenda
- II. Public Comments²
- III. Unfinished Business
 - 1. Proposed Austerity Measures
 - 2. Amendment to Instructional Minutes
- IV. New Business
- V. Executive Session³
 - 1. Legal Updates
 - 2. Personnel
 - 3. Other matters
- VI. Discussion of Agenda for next Board meeting
- VII. Adjournment

¹ In the event that the items on the agenda are not completed, the meeting will recess and reconvene on the following day or at the most expeditious date and time determined by the Board.

² Pursuant to BOE Policy 0415, public comments are limited to 30 minutes. We ask that remarks be limited to 3 minutes each. Everyone is welcomed to submit written comments.

³ Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Board may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Health. More importantly, the CNMI community's health. That is Sami Birmingham-Babauta's passion, what she strives for, and the trajectory of a career path that has taken her from a summer internship with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention to her current job in the Nutrition and Health Program of the Northern Marianas College-Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services.

She knows that this work is not easy, but she also knows that it can be done.

Birmingham-Babauta, 26, graduated with a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology from California State University in Northridge. In 2016, just before moving back to Saipan, she had a short stint as a summer intern at the CDC. She then held several positions at the Commonwealth Health Care Corp., worked as program manager for non-profit group 500 Sails, and is now with NMC-CREES.

"Improving the overall health of the community is multi-faceted, with things like improving access to health care and advocating for policies that create environments that support physical activity

(sidewalks, bike lanes, fitness parks, etc.). While I work in different [capacities] to accomplish this, my niche is teaching and promoting active living and using physical activity to prolong life and prevent diseases," she said.

Birmingham-Babauta admits that keeping good health is a global challenge and that came into particular focus when she was selected as one of the 199 young Obama Foundation Leaders from all over the world to join the program.

"The Obama Future Leaders Program is about bringing emerging young leaders in the Asia and Pacific region together. ... Going through the workshops they had for us was empowering. ... At the convention in Kuala Lumpur, I realized that a lot of us are fighting the same battles in our homes, and connecting us reminded us that our work is important and we are not alone," she said.

"I believe that their vision is to connect us so we can have these conversations now, and have more time to work toward saving our planet. I think they picked leaders that they foresee advancing from community leaders to leaders in the region, and ultimately, internationally," she added.

Birmingham-Babauta describes meeting former United States president Barack

Obama as "invigorating." She feels that that encounter validated her advocacies.

"As we walked over to my work station—we were building school furniture—all I kept thinking was, 'Wow, he's so tall!' as he spoke to us individually. I enjoyed his 'down-to-earth-dude' demeanor," she said. "Honestly, the whole experience was surreal. Both meeting him and having him and Mrs. Obama speak to us made me feel validated—my work, my passion, and my dreams that I am constantly working to fruition. Even when I feel like I'm not doing enough, I did something to get here," she said.

Outside CREES, Birmingham-Babauta is part of the planning committee of the Marianas March Against Cancer, which is gearing up for the month of May; she is an assistant teacher of "Layak" or the sailing class of 500 Sails; she is the Physical Activity Council chairwoman; helps with the Dee Clayton Classic, a bodybuilding and physique show; and works part-time as a personal trainer and fitness instructor at Latte Built Fitness & Nutrition. "...I was just invited to co-emcee the 2020 University of Guam Conference on 'Island Sustainability,'" she added.

A new year goal she has set for herself is to be more of a

minimalist. "I lost a lot of stuff in Super Typhoon Yutu and it was sort of liberating to be rid of things," she said.

"Those things became trash and there was so much trash on the island post-Yutu. Consumerism is a huge contributor to climate change, so I'm more mindful of my pur-

chases as I work to reduce my waste," she added.

Other things that she would like to accomplish includes creating and implementing a project that's impactful to the community, which she said is already in the works. "I would like to get into graduate school for a master's [degree] in Pub-

lic Health," she said.

"I hope I leave people feeling inspired to do their thing, whatever it is for them. If they're working with me, if nothing else, I hope to leave them inspired to live active lifestyles, eat well, and know that good health comes from everyday choices," she added.

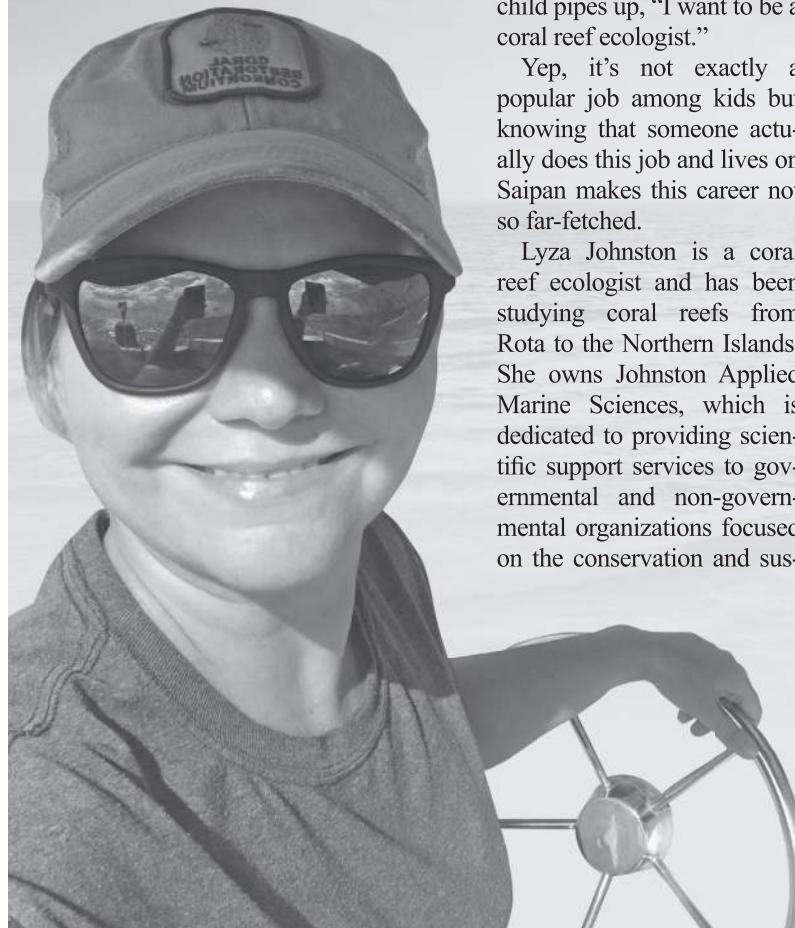


A passion for a healthy CNMI

Inspired by the power and beauty of the ocean

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Children often get asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"



Usually, they would say, "A fireman" or "A policeman" or maybe, "A doctor."

Aww, that's cute, you say.

How then would you react if a child pipes up, "I want to be a coral reef ecologist."

Yep, it's not exactly a popular job among kids but knowing that someone actually does this job and lives on Saipan makes this career not so far-fetched.

Lyza Johnston is a coral reef ecologist and has been studying coral reefs from Rota to the Northern Islands. She owns Johnston Applied Marine Sciences, which is dedicated to providing scientific support services to governmental and non-governmental organizations focused on the conservation and sus-

tainable management of coral reefs and other marine ecosystems.

According to her, coral reefs only grow in warm tropical waters that often surround idyllic islands. That was a motivation strong enough for Johnston to specialize in corals. "I love the ocean and marine ecosystems. After my first internship with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Miami, I was totally hooked. It's a whole other world down there, a world that is fascinating, beautiful, wonderfully bizarre, and really important to human life," she said.

Unfortunately, although it covers over 70% of the surface of the planet, the ocean often gets overlooked because most people don't ever see it, especially below the surface, and don't understand how important it is to their everyday lives. "So I think that it is important for people like me to not only study the ocean, but also advocate and educate for its protection," she added.

Johnston has been involved with NOAA for over 15 years. That got started in 2004 as an undergraduate marine science student. Her internship with NOAA in Miami "turned into a Ph.D., really shaping my career path. I was then a NOAA contractor, working in the same lab for

six years during graduate school.

"When I first came to Saipan, I was working for the CNMI Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality. In that role, I worked closely with the local NOAA office on a variety of management, conservation, and research projects," she said.

Recently, in the private sector, Johnston was awarded a contract to help NOAA establish the first ocean-based coral nursery in the CNMI.

"This is a very exciting project that will eventually provide local managers with corals for restoring degraded reefs around the CNMI. The nursery was installed last year and is doing really well so far and I am excited about maintaining and expanding the coral nursery as we will be doubling the capacity of the nursery in the first half of the year," she said.

"I am also working on building partnerships with local, regional, and international organizations to provide more resources for local managers and conservationists. I want to expand my business, hire my first full-time employee, and support at least one local student intern over the summer. Finally, I am hoping to establish a non-profit organization in the CNMI dedicated to coral reef research and conservation," she added.

Johnston gave a presentation on the coral nursery for visiting members of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures. "I am most passionate, though, about supporting students, especially girls and women, who are interested in science careers. ... I am an adjunct instructor at [the Northern Marianas College], and have mentored 12 student interns over my six years on Saipan," she said.

"Teaching students and giving them the opportunity to get hands-on experience in marine science and conservation has been incredibly rewarding and I hope to continue and expand those efforts in the future," she added.

Johnston believes that taking baby steps doesn't matter in achieving goals. The most important thing is one should never stop. "I constantly advocate for environmental protection and stewardship and I think the most important positive influence that I can have is as a role model for other girls and women who want to be scientists, eco-warriors, and/or business owners," she said.

"Women are still grossly underrepresented—and underpaid—in STEM fields, boardrooms, and government offices. The more of us that are out there doing these things, the more normal it will become," she added.

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

America is facing a pandemic. Stop playing politics and protect us

For the good of the country, Congress and the White House need to rise above their usual partisan sniping and name-calling and show a little unified leadership as the United States readies itself for the spread of the new coronavirus, COVID-19.

We know it will be hard, given the level of bitter polarization in Washington, but Democrats and Republicans owe it to the American people to swallow their differences. That's what rational, responsible governments do in cases of war, natural disaster and, yes, a mass outbreak of infectious disease.

There's a lot riding on the ability of the federal government to get things done fast to support states like California that are on the front lines fighting this new and frightening infection, which has killed more than 2,800 people, most of them in China, and has spread to 47 countries. An outbreak in the U.S. seems all but inevitable now that the first case of community transmission was discovered in Northern California on Wednesday. Transmission without a known connection to someone who is sick or traveled to a place where people are sick marks a concerning turning point in any disease outbreak.

One thing that needs to happen now is the accelerated production of the estimated 270 million face masks needed to protect healthcare providers; another is to get working testing kits out to the states to confirm suspected cases. California, which has the most confirmed COVID-19 cases in the nation, has only a few hundred virus testing kits, according to Gov. Gavin Newsom. That's not nearly enough when at least 8,400 people in California are being monitored for the infection because they've traveled to places where it is widespread.

President Donald Trump made the same point about working together during a news conference Wednesday night, when he walked back some of his recent bluster about the coronavirus being no big deal. Instead, he tried to assure the country that he and his team had things completely under control. (To make that point he waved a printout that he said was a list from the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore ranking the U.S. as the most prepared country to handle an epidemic.)

"We should be working together," he said when asked about criticism by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and the partisan debate about the right amount of federal funds needed to properly prepare. Pelosi "shouldn't be making statements like that because it's so bad for the country," he said.

We agree with the call for bipartisanship wholeheartedly, but we were dismayed that the president then undercut his own point by trash-talking Pelosi, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-New York) and all of the Democratic candidates for president on whom he inexplicably placed blame for the recent stock

See AMERICA on Next Page



How my Korean immigrant parents taught me to pursue my own version of the American dream

When I was very young, my parents worked as night janitors at a law firm in Los Angeles. They often took me to work because they couldn't afford child care, and to keep my grumpiness at bay they zoomed me around in empty wastebaskets as if they were race cars and made up funny stories about the people who inhabited the offices by day. While they cleaned, I would fall asleep on my father's jacket.

We had very little, but I was happy. We had a small TV on which I watched cartoons, and on weekends we drove along Pacific Coast Highway, marveling at the vast ocean. And though we lived in a tiny apartment in a cramped building in Koreatown with other immigrant families and the occasional cockroach, I had everything I needed.

After my brother was born, my dad secured a job as a machinist, making metal parts for cars, boats and airplanes. We moved into a small house in a working-class neighborhood in Norwalk. As I befriended kids on the block, I became aware that our house looked like the others from the outside, but the inside couldn't have been more different.

We had few possessions. In comparison, my friends lived in splendor. Exotic objects I'd only seen on TV filled their homes: cake stands on the dining table, Atari consoles in the den, Slip 'n Slides in the backyard.

When winter arrived, I was introduced to Santa—a figure completely foreign to my parents, who'd grown up in the countryside of South Korea. My friends bragged about all the bounty they expected from him, and so I ran home to tell my parents what they needed to do: Buy surprise gifts for me and my baby brother and place them under a Christmas tree while we slept.

My parents did exactly as instructed, except I'd neglected to mention several key details, so the gifts weren't wrapped and they still bore price tags. At 6 years old, I considered myself the family expert on American life, so I lectured my parents on how to improve their Santa game for the next year.

I also taught them how to organize my party for my 7th birthday so it would be just like the ones my friends had. They were to buy a cake with candles and a fancy dress for me with a bow in the back, and—most importantly—call my friends' parents to inform them about the event. They did exactly as I said, except they hadn't told anyone it was my birthday party, so the kids arrived with no gifts, wearing nothing special.

I spent the entire party sulking. When our guests left, my mom gently explained that requiring people to bring gifts would be greedy and inelegant. The presence of our friends was enough of a gift. That night, she prepared a traditional Korean birthday meal for me—rice with seaweed soup and side dishes. For des-

By HELENA KU RHEE

Los Angeles Times

Helena Ku Rhee's children's book, *The Paper Kingdom*, is based on her childhood when her parents worked as night janitors.



sert, we had tangerines.

I cried myself to sleep. Would we ever be American?

As a child, I thought being American meant to go shopping, to fill our home with objects of desire to show off to visitors. This was the message I received from TV and magazines, and even most grown-ups seemed to have adopted this as the shining truth, dreaming of fancier cars and bigger homes.

As I grew older, I promised myself that I would make up for the years of deprivation. Memories of my parents' toil defined my life, propelling me to eventually become a corporate lawyer. I treated my parents to vacations and chipped away at their mortgage.

I was also finally able to pursue what I thought defined the American dream for those around me: a life of stability and comfort in a beautiful home full of gleaming objects. I believed that "Treat Yo'self" was synonymous with the American dream, and so I spent one of my first paychecks on a Cartier watch, which set the tone for years of shopping.

As the decades passed and a sense of dissatisfaction lingered, I came to realize that I was living someone else's dream, shaped by advertisements and social pressures to be like everybody else. No object I could buy would ever satisfy my hunger for wonder and meaning. The pursuit of unneeded possessions had helped bury my truest, deepest desire: I had always wanted to be a writer. I loved stories for their ability to transport me into different lives, different worlds. I had sporadically tried to establish myself as a children's book author, but the constant rejections wore me down.

Then one night about five years ago, I was driving down Wilshire Boulevard and the past suddenly burned bright, bringing to the fore the lesson my parents taught me on those long, late nights when they cleaned offices: No matter who you are or what your background, with hard work and imagination, you just may attain your truest and deepest dream. I recognized my American dream was to write books that could make a reader's imagination soar, as mine did on those long-ago evenings with my parents.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Are the US and Europe destined for splitsville?

The alliance between the United States and Europe is broken. That much became clear over three days of intensive discussions in Munich last month. To be sure, it can be fixed. But that will take a fundamental readjustment in policy and direction on both sides of the Atlantic.

Every year, top U.S. and European officials gather in February at the Munich Security Conference to assess the state of their alliance. The tone was set by conference organizers, who coined the phrase “Westlessness” as the theme for the conference. Both the world and the West itself, they suggested, were becoming less western.

Europeans embraced the notion and pointed to many reasons for the seeming decline of the West—including the rise of China, the upsurge of nativist populism and the growing challenge from Russia. But to most, the underlying cause lay not in Beijing, Berlin or Moscow—but in Washington.

“Under its current administration, our closest ally, the United States of America, rejects the very concept of an international community,” intoned German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. And he accused Washington of acting “even at the expense of neighbors and partners.” French President Emmanuel Macron agreed: “America has retreated from the world, and it is no longer cooperating with us as much.”

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sharply disagreed. “I am happy to report that the death of the transatlantic alliance is grossly overexaggerated,” he told the large gathering. “The West is winning. We are collectively winning. We’re doing it together.”

It doesn’t much matter who is right in their analysis; what matters is that these perceptions of the state of the alliance are so far apart. And it isn’t just a question of rhetoric. It’s about the fundamentals of the relationship, where there is growing distrust on both sides of the Atlantic in each other’s intentions.

Take China. American officials, led by Defense Secretary Mark Esper, repeatedly warned about China’s nefarious activities in trade, telecommunications, infrastructure and military modernization and argued that countering Beijing is now Washington’s top priority. And they demanded European allies choose between succumbing to China’s subversion or joining the United States in confronting China head on.

The immediate focus was on whether to allow Huawei to build part of the European 5G network. All Americans present, including congressional leaders such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, urged Europe to reject Huawei for fear it would open up European communications to Chinese spying. But asked what alternative technologies the U.S. had on offer, their answer was that something would be developed one day. Few Europeans bought it.

Or take the European Union. For European officialdom, the EU represents all that is positive about their recent history. By working together, sharing sovereignty and integrating their economies, Europe replaced centuries of internecine warfare with decades of prosperity and peace. For Berlin, Paris, Rome and others there is no future without the EU.

But while successive U.S. administrations have backed this European project, the tone has shifted in recent years. Just days before the Munich gathering, President Donald Trump had claimed that the “European Union was really formed so they could treat us badly.” And Pompeo used his Munich speech to preach the virtues of sovereignty, using the term no less than 17 times in a 15-minute speech.

Europeans no longer shake their heads when hearing such talk. They’re convinced Washington is out to try to break up the union. The administration’s open support for Brexit is seen as but the first step. One top German official told me that Washington’s support of the “Three Seas Initiative,” which seeks to counter Russia by improving infrastructure linking

By IVO DAALDER

Chicago Tribune

Ivo Daalder is president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a former U.S. ambassador to NATO.



the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas, was really designed to split eastern European EU members from their western counterparts in an effort to destroy the union.

That reads more into U.S. actions than is there, but it reflects the tendency to think the worst. Distrust is growing perceptibly on both sides. That’s how alliances founder.

To be sure, no one wants to see a formal breakup. But the real question is whether Europeans and Americans are willing to take the necessary steps to prevent it from happening.

In Europe, that means building up the collective capacity for action—politically, economically and militarily. That requires more than declaration and speeches, or acknowledging that Europe needs “to develop an appetite for power.” It needs to develop actual power and demonstrate a willingness to use it to address growing challenges from China, the Middle East, North Africa and more.

In Washington, meanwhile, it’s high time to abandon the negative attitude toward allies and the EU. The U.S. needs to lead again, bringing together its European, North American and Asian allies in agreeing to a common strategy on trade, digital, telecommunications and, above all, on how best to deal collectively with China’s inevitable rise.

That’s what alliances are all about—the capacity for collective action to advance common interests. And collective action is what’s needed now more than ever.

Making lynching a hate crime is long overdue

It took more than 100 years and 200 attempts, but the sick and heinous act of lynching is finally close to being deemed a federal hate crime in this country.

The U.S. House, in a rare bipartisan act, overwhelmingly passed the Emmett Till Antilynching Act on Wednesday, with just four lawmakers opposed to it. The U.S. Senate, led by its three black members, passed similar legislation last year, and all that’s left is President Donald Trump’s signature. He has indicated he will give his blessing.

Recognizing the brutality of lynching is a long time coming and, quite frankly, America should hold its head in shame it was not done sooner.

But now is better than never. I am glad Congress finally found the courage and heart to do the right thing.

Now people who engage in what historically was an act of vigilante justice by whites who wanted to keep African Americans in their place can be charged and convicted for a federal hate crime. Punishment is up to life in prison, a fine or both.

For decades, an unfair justice system meant that people were never charged in lynching, found innocent by compassionate all-white juries or received light sentences. The brutal punishment was often for unproven crimes, such as looking at a white woman or disrespecting a white person.

And while it’s true that lynching is not common in current times, the legislation sends a strong message that as a country we won’t tolerate brutal acts of racism.

“It shows that we, as a nation, know the difference between right and wrong, even if it took us a while to get there,” said Will

Schwarz, president of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, Inc. “It at last criminalizes the most virulent weapon of white supremacy. It’s a long overdue admission that black Americans have been the targets of a terror campaign for hundreds of years.”

Some would say it is better to leave this history in the past. That white Americans today shouldn’t be responsible for the past transgressions of their ancestors. That it makes them uncomfortable to think about and will rile up tensions between the races.

But we don’t whitewash the past just to make people comfortable. You can’t heal from the past if you don’t confront it. America needs to do a better job at looking at itself. We can decry human rights issues in China and women’s right issues in the Middle East but brush aside our own issues with treating certain groups badly.

“It points to some unflattering features of American exceptionalism: denial and arrogance,” Schwarz said. “We are eager to celebrate our ideals, but reluctant to admit our faults. America has been unwilling to confront our legacy of lynching and its suffocating, corrosive effects. But the passage of this law is a signal that things are beginning to change.”

Lynchings took place not so long ago, and the legacy of the killings are felt in the injustices many African Americans experience today—from mass incarceration to economic inequality. Let’s remember the namesake of the legislation was beaten and lynched in 1955, after supposedly whistling at a white woman. There’s plenty of people still alive who can remember that day.

Government officials often sanctioned, and even participated in lynchings. Therefore, the government has an obligation to

By ANDREA K. McDANIELS

The Baltimore Sun

Andrea K. McDaniels is the Baltimore Sun’s deputy editorial page editor.



play a role in reconciling the past.

In Maryland it is believed that at least 44 men were lynched between 1865 and 1933. That doesn’t count slaves who killed their “property” at will with no repercussions. These acts were sometimes attended by crowds of people who came to see the show.

And the past is not always left in the past. It’s not out of the realm of possibility that we could see more lynchings take place again. Just look at the comeback of white nationalist rallies.

As House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said: “We cannot deny that racism, bigotry and hate still exist in America.”

We hope the legislation brings more interest in the history of lynching, an issue that is being explored across the country, including at a memorial in Alabama. Maryland recently created the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission to chronicle and spark conversations about the killings in our state.

We can’t erase the past. But we can acknowledge it and make sure it doesn’t happen again.

AMERICA

From Page 10

market drops. Honestly, can he not hear himself?

Trump then announced he was putting Vice President Mike

Pence in charge of the coronavirus response. OK, we’ll see whether that means an intensified focus on the problem; we hope it does. But Pence must offer better, less ideological leadership than he did as governor of Indiana during an HIV epidemic in 2015. That outbreak was traced to drug users sharing infected needles, and public health officials recommended that

the state institute a needle exchange program. But Pence, a religious conservative, disagreed with the experts and delayed action until the outbreak was well underway. That resulted in 173 more infections than might otherwise have occurred, according to a 2018 study.

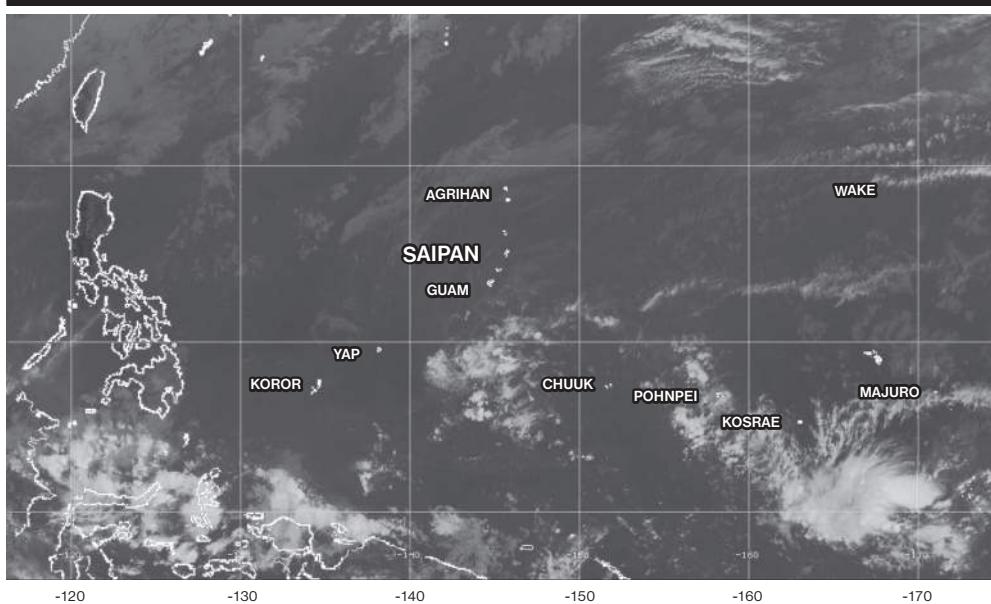
(c)2020 Los Angeles Times

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
87°	77°	87°	77°	87°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:28 AM, MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Kept the scattered showers in the forecast for today and tonight, but lowered the POPs, in anticipation of the drier wedge of air sitting over the islands for the morning. As the trough south of Guam moves west, deeper atmospheric moisture will spread northward, possibly reaching into Guam waters overnight. Early morning NUCAPS sounding data showed the deep-layer dry trade-wind pattern meeting deeper atmospheric moisture near 12N. This deeper moisture, possibly capable of producing a thunderstorm or two, is largely expected to stay south of Guam. By Tuesday, once the trough has moved farther west, a dry trade-wind pattern will resume through the end of the week.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲	▼	°F
Guam and Rota	Windy		85° / 76°
Palau	Thunderstorms		83° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms		86° / 81°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms		86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Windy		85° / 79°
Kosrae	Windy		85° / 79°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy		85° / 80°

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲	▼	°F
Auckland	Showers		73° / 64°
Beijing	Sunny		46° / 25°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy		73° / 63°
Honolulu	Windy		81° / 69°
London	Partly Cloudy		48° / 32°
Los Angeles	Sunny		78° / 53°
Manila	Partly Cloudy		91° / 73°
Melbourne	Showers		73° / 63°
Miami	Partly Cloudy		78° / 73°
New York	Showers		57° / 45°
Osaka	Rain		52° / 43°
Paris	Showers		48° / 36°
Busan	Mostly Sunny		54° / 34°
Rome	Rain		61° / 39°
Salem	Thunderstorms		70° / 55°
San Francisco	Sunny		62° / 46°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy		41° / 27°
Tokyo	Showers		48° / 45°
Washington, DC	Showers		60° / 47°

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
■ Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
■ *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
■ Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY FEET		
2:33 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.32
7:24 AM	LOW TIDE	1.05
12:44 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.52
8:30 PM	LOW TIDE	0.09

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:32 AM	6:25 PM
Wednesday	6:32 AM	6:25 PM
Thursday	6:31 AM	6:25 PM
Friday	6:30 AM	6:25 PM
Saturday	6:30 AM	6:25 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	12:29 AM	12:08 PM
Wednesday	-	1:24 AM	12:58 PM
Thursday	-	2:20 AM	1:53 PM
Friday	-	3:17 AM	2:53 PM
Saturday	-	4:13 AM	3:55 PM

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 6, 2020

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	9:15am	9:55am	Daily	UA174	7:30am	8:11am	Daily
UA156	6:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6	UA112	4:45pm	5:26pm	2, 4, 6
SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
SKY816	4:35pm	7:30pm	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7	SKY811	10:15am	3:00pm	Daily
SKY816	5:05pm	8:00pm	6				
SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)				BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN			
7C3451	3:20am	6:30am	Daily	7C3452	9:35pm	2:30am+1	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
				7C3452	10:05pm	2:30am+1	3
SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)				SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:05am	6:05am	Daily	OZ6233	7:30am	12:50pm	2, 4, 6
OZ626	2:10am	6:05am	1	OZ623	8:10am	1:40pm	1, 3, 5, 7
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 5, 6, 7	7C3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ626	3:35am	7:20am	4	TW309	11:10am	4:40pm	Daily
7C3403	4:35am	8:35am	Daily	OZ625	7:30pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ6243	3:10pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6	TW307	7:45pm	1:05am+1	Daily
OZ624	3:30pm	7:20pm	1, 3, 5, 7	OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
7C3401	4:30pm	8:25pm	Daily	OZ625	9:05pm	2:25am+1	3
TW310	5:40pm	10:15pm	Daily	7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
OZ626/701	2:10am	10:35am	1 via ICN	UA189/174	12:40am	8:11am+1	3, 6 via GUM
OZ626/701	2:50am	10:35am	2, 3, 5, 6, 7 via ICN	OZ702/625	12:05pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
UA117/183	9:15am	9:50pm	Daily via GUM	OZ702/625	12:05pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA117/193	9:15am	11:50pm	2, 5 via GUM-ROR	OZ702/625	12:05pm	2:25am+1	3 via ICN
UA156/183	6:20pm	9:50pm	Daily via GUM	UA192/174	10:40pm	8:11am+1	2, 5 via GUM-ROR
UA156/193	6:20pm	11:50pm	2 via GUM-ROR	UA184/174	10:55pm	8:11am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
				OZ704/6233	11:45pm	12:50pm+1	2, 4, 6 via ICN
				OZ704/623	11:45pm	1:40pm+1	1, 3, 5, 7 via ICN
				OZ704/6233	11:45pm	12:50pm+1	2, 4, 6 via ICN
				OZ704/623	11:45pm	1:40pm+1	1, 3 via ICN
SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)				HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN			
OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN	OZ746/6233	12:35am	12:50pm	2, 4, 6 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2				

Business

Oil prices fall as coronavirus spreads outside China

NEW YORK (AP)—With the viral outbreak spreading to more countries, the price of oil has dropped precipitously as global demand weakens even further.

That has sent shares tumbling for oil giants like Exxon and Chevron while smaller producers with idling rigs continue to slash jobs.

Hundreds of new cases of the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease have been announced in recent days outside of China. The list of countries touched by the illness has climbed to nearly 60 as Mexico, Belarus, Lithuania, New Zealand, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, Iceland and the Netherlands reported their first cases. More than 85,000 people worldwide have contracted the illness, with deaths topping 2,900.

Oil industry analysts fear that what they thought was a contained disruption may instead lead to more travel restrictions and even less oil consumed.

"That was the fear all along, that the virus would not be contained in China," said Claudio Galimberti, head of demand, refining and agriculture at S&P Global Platts. "There are entire cities, and in some cases regions, that are in a lockdown. When you begin to have a lockdown, people work from home, factories shut down, people don't travel. The impact



AP
In this Thursday, Aug. 31, 2017, file photo, a flame burns at the Shell Deer Park oil refinery in Deer Park, Texas.

on oil is very, very bad."

Oil prices fell dramatically in mid-February, but had been steadily climbing back as the number of new cases of the virus in China slowed. In the last week, however, reports of the spreading virus knocked prices down. The benchmark for U.S. crude oil fell 16% during the week, settling Friday at \$44.76 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, dropped 14% for the week to its lowest

Japan electronics maker Sharp to make masks at display plant

TOKYO (AP)—Electronics maker Sharp Corp. said Monday it will start making surgical masks, which are in high demand because of the virus outbreak, using a plant in central Japan that usually makes displays.

Sharp, owned by Hon Hai Precision Industry Co., also known as FoxConn, of Taiwan, said mask production at its Mie Prefecture plant will start by the end of this month, at 150,000 masks a day, rising to 500,000 a day.

Electronics displays are generally made in what are called "germ-free" plants for the sake of high quality. So small particles can't get into the manufacturing process, making it a good place for mask-making.

Masks are hard to find on

store shelves in many places. In Japan, long lines form outside some drug stores, even before they open.

Japanese have long worn face masks to prevent spreading colds or alleviate allergies. That practice has grown more widespread since the recent outbreak of the novel coronavirus that causes the disease known as COVID-19.

Shoppers have been clearing store shelves of other supplies seemingly directly unrelated to viruses, such as toilet paper and rice.

Sharp, based in Osaka, Japan, said in a statement it hoped to contribute to society by making the masks.

Their prices, sales channels and other details are still undecided, it said.

levels since July 2017, closing Friday at \$50.52 a barrel.

Meanwhile, shares of Exxon Mobil tumbled to \$49.82 on Thursday, reaching a 15-year low, before rebounding more than 3% on Friday. Chevron Corp. shares hit their lowest level in nearly four years on Friday.

The Financial Times reported that Saudi Arabia is pushing for deep cuts in oil production to help stabilize prices in the face of falling demand. The newspaper, citing people fa-

miliar with the talks, said the Saudis propose to bear most of the brunt of a cutback of 1 million barrels per day but want Russia and other big producers to join them. Representatives of OPEC and allies like Russia plan to meet next week.

If demand for oil and the price of a barrel continues to fall, that may result in lower gasoline prices—a potential bright side for consumers, who account for about 70% of U.S. economic activity.

Gasoline prices have been fluctuating in recent weeks, but nothing significant that could be attributed to the coronavirus, said Jeanette Casselano, director of public relations at AAA. Prices tend to rise for the summer driving season, but the effects of coronavirus on the price of oil could mitigate that.

Lower prices at the pump, however, aren't necessarily good for the U.S. economy overall. When energy prices fall, energy companies tend to cut back on

investment and jobs. A freefall in gasoline prices led to a sharp drop in U.S. business investment in 2016, for instance—one reason the country's economic growth slowed to 1.6% that year from 2.9% in 2015.

When the coronavirus first hit, the Energy Information Administration predicted global oil demand would fall to 100.3 million barrels per day in the first quarter of 2020, down about 900,000 barrels, or 1%, from what was estimated in January. The agency said it expects global oil demand to rise by 1 million barrels per day in 2020, which is lower than its growth prediction last month of 1.3 million barrels per day this year.

Those numbers were released in mid-February, before the number of reported cases outside of China began to rise significantly, so analysts expect estimates to get worse.

On Monday, ING head of commodities strategy Warren Patterson said he expects travel restrictions and factory shutdowns caused by coronavirus to shave 400,000 barrels a day from global consumption growth, which would take the industry to its lowest level of consumption in a decade.

China manufacturing slumps as anti-virus controls bite

BEIJING (AP)—China's manufacturing plunged in February as anti-virus controls shut down much of the world's second-largest economy, but companies are confident activity will revive following government stimulus efforts, according to two surveys.

The data add to growing signs of the disease's cost. Global stock markets have tumbled more than 10% since mid-February as outbreaks in Iran, Italy and South Korea fueled fears the virus's impact will spread.

Chinese factory activity fell at its fastest rate and to its lowest level on record as anti-disease efforts closed factories and disrupted supplies, according to surveys by a business magazine, China's statistics agency and an industry group.

A monthly purchasing man-

agers' index released Monday by Caixin magazine fell to 40.3 from January's 51.1 on a 100-point scale on which numbers below 50 show activity contracting.

Despite that, business confidence rose to a five-year high after the ruling Communist Party launched efforts to revive industry with tax cuts and other aid, Caixin said.

"Manufacturers were confident that output would rise over the next year," the magazine said in a statement.

A separate PMI released Saturday by the National Bureau of Statistics and the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing fell to 35.7 from January's 50.

The group of companies covered by the Caixin survey, begun in 2004, has more private companies and exporters.

The survey by the NBS and the logistics federation, carried out since 2002, has more state-owned enterprises that serve China's domestic market.

Both surveys came in well below their previous record lows following the 2008 global financial crisis.

The government extended the Lunar New Year holiday to keep factories and offices closed.

Shock waves spread through Asia and other suppliers of components and raw materials as demand from Chinese factories that assemble most of the world's smartphones, toys, home appliances and other consumer goods plummeted.

The Communist Party is trying to revive business activity in some parts of China while ordering areas deemed

at high disease risk to stay focused on fighting the virus. Beijing has cut a key interest rate and promised tax breaks, low-cost loans and other aid. Local officials have orders to help millions of employees get back to work while preventing a rebound in infections.

Chinese officials have expressed confidence the ruling party's annual economic growth targets can be met despite the disruption.

Economic growth fell to a multi-decade low of 6.1% last year. Forecasters already expected this year's growth to decline below 6%. They say the longer it takes to control the virus, the bigger the stimulus will have to be to hit official growth targets. That might push up already high debt levels.



LEADING INDICATORS

DOW
25,409.36
-357.28
1.39%

S&P
2,954.22
-24.54
0.82%

NASDAQ
8,567.37
+0.89
0.010%

In U.S. dollar terms

EXCHANGE RATES

Australian Dollar	1.5335
British Pound	0.7796
Canadian Dollar	1.3343
Chinese Yuan	6.8468
Euro	0.9051
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7833
Indian Rupee	71.5315
Japanese Yen	108.1040
Malaysian Ringgit	4.1567
New Zealand Dollar	1.6055
Philippine Peso	49.8349
Russian Ruble	66.6717
Singapore Dollar	1.3906
South Korean Won	1174.80
Swiss Franc	0.9642
Taiwan Dollar	29.5398
Thailand Baht	31.2515

Nation

Authorities announce 2nd coronavirus death in US

SEATTLE (AP)—Health officials in Washington state said Sunday night that a second person had died from the coronavirus — a man in his 70s from a nursing facility near Seattle where dozens of people were sick and had been tested for the virus.

Researchers said earlier the virus may have been circulating for weeks undetected in Washington state.

In a statement, Public Health—Seattle & King County said the man died Saturday. On Friday, health officials said a man in his 50s died of coronavirus, the first death from the virus in the U.S.. Both had underlying health conditions, and both were being treated at a hospital in Kirkland, Washington, east of Seattle.

Washington state now has 12 confirmed cases.

State and local authorities stepped up testing for the illness as the number of new cases grew nationwide, with new infections announced in California, Florida, Illinois, Rhode Island, New York and Washington state.

Authorities in the Seattle area reported four new cases Sunday night, including the man who died. Two health care workers in California were also diagnosed. Of the new Washington state cases, two were women, one in her 80s and another in her 90s. Both were in critical condition. A man in his 70s was also in critical condition. All three were from the LifeCare nursing facility in Kirkland, Wash-



Travelers wear protective mask as they walk through in terminal 5 at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, Sunday, March 1, 2020. AP

ington, where health officials said 50 people are sick and being tested for the virus.

On Sunday night, the International Association of Fire Fighters said 25 members who responded to calls for help at the nursing facility are being quarantined.

The first U.S. case was a Washington state man who had visited China, where the virus first emerged, but several recent cases in the U.S. have had no known connection to travelers.

In California, two health care workers in the San Fran-

cisco Bay area who cared for an earlier coronavirus patient were diagnosed with the virus on Sunday, the Alameda and Solano counties said in a joint statement.

The health care workers are both employed at NorthBay VacaValley Hospital in Vacaville, California, and had exposure to a patient treated there before being transferred to UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, the statement said. That patient was the first person in the U.S. discovered to have contracted the coronavirus with no known over-

seas travel.

Alameda County declared a state of emergency on Sunday following the news.

In Oregon, the state Health Authority said Sunday that a second person in the state tested positive for the virus. The person is an adult in household contact with the first Oregonian to test positive

and does not need medical attention, the authority said.

Elsewhere, authorities announced Sunday a third case in Illinois and Rhode Island and New York's first cases as worried Americans swarmed stores to stock up on basic goods such as bottled water, canned foods and toilet paper.

The hospitalized patient in

Rhode Island is a man in his 40s who had traveled to Italy in February. New York confirmed Sunday that a woman in her late 30s contracted the virus while traveling in Iran. The patient is not in serious condition. She has respiratory symptoms and has been in a controlled situation since arriving in New York, according to a statement from the governor's office.

As the fallout continued, Vice President Mike Pence and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar sought to reassure the American public that the federal government is working to make sure state and local authorities are able to test for the virus. Both said during a round of TV talk show appearances Sunday that thousands more testing kits had been distributed to state and local officials, with thousands more to come.

"They should know we have the best public health system in the world looking out for them," Azar said, adding that additional cases will be reported and the overall risk to Americans is low.

Judge rules head of immigration agency was unlawfully named

SAN DIEGO (AP)—A federal judge has ruled that Ken Cuccinelli was unlawfully appointed to lead the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agency and, as a result, lacked authority to give asylum seekers less time to prepare for initial screening interviews.

Cuccinelli, a former Virginia attorney general and an immigration hardliner, was named to a new position of "principal deputy director" in June, which immediately made him acting director because Lee Francis Cissna had just resigned. The agency grants green cards and other visas and also oversees asylum officers.

The judge wrote that Cuccinelli didn't qualify for exceptions for officials who won Senate approval for other positions or spent 90 days in the previous year at the agency.

The administration's reading of the law "would decimate this carefully crafted framework," Moss wrote in his 55-page ruling. "The President would be relieved of responsibility and accountability for selecting acting officials, and the universe of those eligible to serve in an acting capacity would be vastly expanded."

Moss, an appointee of President Barack Obama, set aside a Cuccinelli directive to give asylum seekers less time to consult attorneys before an initial screening interview, but his decision applies only to the five Hondurans who sued. He did not address oth-

er Cuccinelli actions.

The asylum directive gives asylum seekers at least one calendar day to prepare for the screening interview, instead of 72 hours for families and generally 48 hours for single adults. Extensions are granted only "in the most extraordinary circumstances," such as a serious illness or mental or physical disability.

The directive is a foundation for new policies aimed at quickly completing the screening, known as a "credible fear interview," without leaving Customs and Border Protection custody.

Homeland Security Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said, "We obviously disagree with the court's opinion and are looking more closely at it."

Cuccinelli is now acting deputy Homeland Security secretary, the department's No. 2 position. Joseph Edlow, a longtime congressional aide who joined Citizenship and Immigration Services in July, was named last month to run the agency's day-to-day operations.

Some states make it harder for college students to vote

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Vanderbilt University student Will Newell wishes it was easier for college students like him to cast ballots in Tennessee, one of 14 states holding a presidential primary on Super Tuesday.

The campus has no locations for early voting, so students must visit an off-campus polling location to cast a ballot on Election Day. Newell drives but worries that many students who don't have their own transportation won't make it to a precinct. He said some campus groups offer rides to students, but the university itself does not provide a shuttle.

He supports a bill introduced in the Tennessee Legislature that would require early voting locations at large colleges and universities in the state. That's not the only restriction working against college students in the state. Ten-

nessee, where overall voter turnout is low, is among several states that does not allow a college student ID. But it does allow a handgun license.

"It just makes the last part of actually getting them to the polls to vote a lot more difficult," Newell, a senior public policy and economics major, said of the ballot-casting hurdles faced by students in the state.

As Democratic candidates seek a boost from young voters in 2020, their impact at the polls could be blunted in a number of states that make voting more difficult for college students. Those include laws related to voter IDs, residency requirements and on-campus polling places. Critics say many of those laws are designed to dampen turnout among voters who typically lean Democratic.

College groups aligned with the Democratic Party

are mobilizing this year in an effort to defeat President Donald Trump's re-election, said Matt Nowling, national director of communications for the College Democrats of America.

"Republicans see that and they're scared," said Nowling, a junior at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. "College Democrats have been at the forefront of fighting against these issues."

Their efforts face obstacles, however.

Democrats say Republican-controlled legislatures in some states are actively trying to keep college students away from the polls. Some laws have been challenged in court, such as in New Hampshire, where a law essentially makes out-of-state college students subject to residency requirements like obtaining a state driver's license or registering their vehicles.

Asia

Attacks on Indian journalists highlight growing intolerance

NEW DELHI (AP)—Reporting in India has never been without its risks, but journalists say attacks on the media during last week's deadly communal riots between Hindus and Muslims in New Delhi show the situation is deteriorating.

One reporter was shot and survived, another had his teeth knocked out, and many more said Hindu mobs demanded proof of religion and tried to keep them from documenting vandalism and violence that included people attacking one another with axes, swords, metal pipes and guns.

Authorities have yet to provide an official account of what sparked the 72-hour clash that left 42 people dead and hundreds wounded, though tensions between Hindus and Muslims have been building for months over a new citizenship law. Nor have

they addressed journalists' allegations that they were singled out by Hindu mobs.

But experts and journalists say the attacks on reporters covering the riots—and censorship of critical content in the aftermath of the violence—are a sign of growing intolerance for independent reporting in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist led government.

Anindya Chattopadhyay, a photographer for the Times of India newspaper, said that as he reached the scene of the riots Tuesday, a man approached him, offering to put a tilak, a mark indicating a person is Hindu, on his forehead.

The man said it would make his work easier. Chattopadhyay refused, but later, after he rushed to take pictures of a building on fire, he was approached by a group demand-

ing to know whether he was Hindu or Muslim, threatening to remove his pants to check whether he was circumcised per Muslim custom.

"I folded my hands and pleaded with them to let me go, saying I was a lowly photographer," Chattopadhyay recalled.

He noted that while journalists in India have always been targeted for their work, under Modi "the attackers are much more open, furious and fearless."

Modi was accused of tac-

it support for the rampage against Muslims, and was even banned by the U.S. from traveling there, though he was ultimately cleared by a court of wrongdoing and the travel ban was lifted.

Modi's supporters saw the international criticism of him and pinned the blame for it on journalists and other critics, a feeling that continues today, said Ashutosh Varshney, a professor at Brown University and an expert on India's his-

tory of riots.

"Right since 2002, Hindu nationalists have looked at journalists as part of the problem," Varshney said.

He said Modi and his followers believe "critical media" is interfering with their plans to build a Hindu state.

Kuldeep Dhatwalia, a government spokesman and director of the federal Press Information Bureau, said he was not "aware of any complaints about press access."



In this Thursday, Feb. 27, 2020 photo, a photojournalist takes photographs of Indian paramilitary soldiers patrolling a street vandalized in Tuesday's violence in New Delhi, India. AP

Afghan peace deal hits first snag over prisoner releases

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghanistan's president said Sunday that he will not free thousands of Taliban prisoners ahead of all-Afghan power-sharing talks set for next week, publicly disagreeing with a timetable for a speedy prisoner release laid out just a day earlier in a U.S.-Taliban peace agreement.

President Ashraf Ghani's comments pointed to the first hitch in implementing the fragile deal, which is aimed at ending America's longest war after more than 18 years and getting rival Afghan factions to agree on their country's future.

Still, the U.S. has said a planned U.S. troop withdrawal over the next 14 months is linked to the Taliban's counter-terrorism performance, not to progress in intra-Afghan talks.

Washington's Peace Envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, who served as America's first ambassador to Afghanistan after the 2001 U.S. invasion, spent the past 17 months running on-and-off again talks with the Taliban to hammer out the agreement.

The U.S.-Taliban deal signed Saturday in the Middle Eastern State of Qatar envisions the release of up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners by the Afghan government ahead of talks between Afghan factions meant to begin March 10 in the Norwegian capital of Oslo. The Taliban would release up to 1,000 prisoners.

Ghani told a news conference in the Afghan capital of Kabul on Sunday that this

wasn't a promise the United States could make. He said the release of any prisoners was a decision for his government to take and that he wasn't ready to release prisoners before the start of negotiations.

"The request has been made by the United States for the release of prisoners and it can be part of the negotiations but it cannot be a precondition," Ghani said.

The U.S.-Taliban deal is seen as a historic opportunity to extricate the United States from Afghanistan, a nation convulsed by conflict since the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Yet it could also unravel quickly, particularly if the Taliban fail to deliver on a promise that no terror attacks would be launched from Afghan soil.

The intra-Afghan talks between squabbling political factions and rival Taliban in Afghanistan are even more intricate—even if a potential failure might not slow the withdrawal of American forces.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said he considered a prisoner exchange an important confidence-building measure.

"Everything is interconnected," he said Sunday about the agreement's 14-month timeframe.

"The prisoner exchange will be one of the first confidence-building measures, so it will remain a very critical step that we need to push forward," he added.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Chinese man sentenced to die for murders at virus roadblock

BEIJING (AP)—A driver who fatally stabbed two people guarding a virus-control roadblock in southwestern China was sentenced to death Sunday, a state news agency reported. The report was a rare sign of public defiance of sweeping anti-disease controls that suspended access to several major cities and shut down much of China's economy starting in late January. Ma Jiaoguo arrived at the roadblock in Honghe County in Yunnan province on Feb. 6, the Xinhua News Agency reported, citing the Intermediate People's Court of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture. A passenger in Ma's minivan tried to remove the roadblock, Xinhua said. It said Ma stabbed a member of the checkpoint team who used a cellphone to film the incident and a second member who came to defend him. The passenger was tried separately, Xinhua said. Chinese authorities are trying to

revive commercial activity but many controls on movement still are in effect.

South's military: N. Korea fires unidentified projectiles

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea fired two unidentified projectiles from a coastal area Monday as it resumed weapons demonstrations following a months-long hiatus. The launches came two days after North Korea's state media said leader Kim Jong Un supervised an artillery drill aimed at testing the combat readiness of units in front-line and eastern areas. Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff confirmed the launches in a statement but couldn't immediately confirm how far the projectiles flew or whether the weapons were ballistic or rocket artillery. During a key ruling party meeting in late December, Kim expressed deep frustration over deadlocked diplomacy with the United States and said he won't denuclearize if the U.S.

persists with its hostile policy on his country. He also said he would unveil a new "strategic weapon" soon and no longer be bound by a self-imposed weapons test moratorium that coincided with his diplomacy with Trump. Nuclear diplomacy between North Korea and the U.S. has largely stalled since the breakdown of Kim's second summit with Trump in February 2019 in Vietnam. That summit collapsed because Trump rejected Kim's demands for broad sanctions relief in return for dismantling his main nuclear complex, a limited disarmament step. Subsequent talks between Pyongyang and Washington reported little progress.

Last crew members leave cruise ship quarantined near Tokyo

TOKYO (AP)—The last group of about 130 crew members got off the Diamond Princess on Sunday, vacating the contaminated cruise ship and ending Japan's much criticized quarantine that left more than one fifth of the ship's

original population infected with the new virus. Japanese Health Minister Katsunobu Kato told a news conference that the ship is now empty and ready for sterilization and safety checks to prepare for its next voyage. He did not give a timeline. The British-flagged and U.S.-operated *Diamond Princess* had carried an infected passenger part way before returning to its home port in Yokohama, near Tokyo, on Feb. 3. Of the 3,711 passengers and crew members on board, 705 were infected on the ship, triggering international criticism of the quarantine and Japan's disease control capability. Kato said the government would investigate the handling of the cruise ship. "We should investigate the case so that we will not expand infections again," he said. He also said, however, that crisis management of a foreign-flagged and operated ship is difficult for a single government to deal with, and suggested that there is a need to promote a global framework in tackling future crises.

World

UK rises to 35 coronavirus cases, Czech Republic sees 1st 3

LONDON (AP)—British health authorities on Sunday confirmed 12 more cases of the new coronavirus, bringing the country's overall tally to 35, and the Czech Republic announced its first three infections.

The British government's chief medical officer, Prof. Chris Whitty, said one of the new patients "had no relevant travel and it is not yet clear whether they contracted it directly or indirectly from an individual who had recently returned from abroad." Whitty said medical workers were still investigating the cause of that infection.

■ ■ ■
PARIS (AP)—Coronavirus cases surged in Italy, and France closed the world-famous Louvre Museum as the epidemic that began in China sent fear rising across Western Europe, threatening its tourism industry.

The virus has spread to more than 60 countries, and more than 3,000 people have died from the COVID-19 illness it causes.

New battle fronts in the battle opened rapidly, deepening the sense of crisis that has already sent financial markets plummeting, emptied the streets in many cities and rewritten the routines of millions of people. More than 88,000 have been infected, on every continent but Antarctica.

Australia and Thailand reported their first deaths Sunday, while the Dominican Republic and the Czech Republic recorded their first infections.

Italian authorities said the number of people infected in the country soared 50% to



AP Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson visits a laboratory at the Public Health England National Infection Service, after more than 10 new coronavirus patients were identified in England, in Colindale, north London, Sunday, March 1, 2020.

1,694 in just 24 hours, and five more had died, bringing the death toll there to 34. Cases in France jumped to 130, an increase of 30 in one day.

China, where the epidemic began in December, reported 202 new cases in its update Monday, the lowest increase since Jan. 21. The city of Wuhan had most of the new cases but also saw 2,570 patients released, continuing a trend that frees up patient beds in the prefabricated isolation wards and hastily built hospitals in the area where the disease has hit hardest.

■ ■ ■
 Three of the new COVID-19 patients in Britain were contacts of an existing patient

while six newly infected people had recently traveled from Italy and two had arrived from Iran. Both countries have been hard hit by the coronavirus that emerged late last year in central China.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told reporters Sunday at a health center in London that he was "very, very confident" that Britain's National Health Service can cope with the virus outbreak.

"(It's) likely to spread a bit more, and it's vital therefore that people understand that we do have a great plan, a plan to tackle the spread of coronavirus," he said.

Coronavirus infections in Italy rose 50% Sunday and the U.S. government issued its

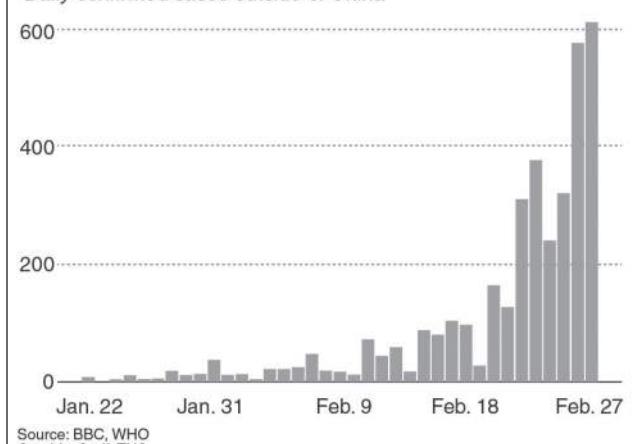
strongest travel warning yet, advising Americans against any travel to two regions in northern Italy—Lombardy and Veneto. Authorities said the total number of people infected in Italy had risen to 1,694, a 50% jump from just 24 hours earlier and the highest figure by far in Europe. Five more people infected with the virus have died, bringing the deaths in Italy to 34, while 83 people have fully recovered.

In London, the Foreign Office confirmed that non-essential staff, as well as dependents, are to be pulled out of the British Embassy in Tehran due to the spread of the virus in Iran.

Elsewhere in Europe,

Coronavirus spikes outside China

Daily confirmed cases outside of China



France raised its number of reported cases to 130 on Sunday, including one in the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, the first in France's overseas territories.

The spreading virus epidemic shut down France's Louvre Museum on Sunday, with workers who guard its famous trove of artworks fearful of being contaminated by the museum's flow of tourists from around the world. Almost three-quarters of the Louvre's 9.6 million visitors last year came from abroad.

Czech Health Minister Adam Vojtech said Sunday that two COVID-19 patients were hospitalized in Prague and another in northern city of Usti nad Labem. All three had travel ties to northern Italy.

Spain said it now has 71 virus cases, many of them linked to Italy.

The Dutch health minister announced three new virus cases, bringing the country's overall tally to 10, while new cases elsewhere brought national totals to Norway 19, Sweden 14 and Finland six.

Center-right president takes office in Uruguay

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay

(AP)—A right-of-center president took office in Uruguay on Sunday, promising to crack down on crime and tighten government finances after a 15-year string of left-leaning governments.

Luis Lacalle Pou, a 46-year-old surfing enthusiast and son of a former president, narrowly won the election in November in his second try for the top office.

Lacalle Pou thanked outgoing President Tabaré Vázquez who gave him the presidential sash.

"The country has built a democracy with this ceremony," he said, celebrating the seventh presidential change since the restoration of democracy in 1985.

Lacalle Pou inherits a country of nearly 3.4 million people that had grown steadily under the outgoing Broad Front government, but rising crime in recent years dented its popularity and economists have grown concerned about a rising fiscal deficit that reached 4.9% of gross domestic product last year.

In his inaugural address, the new leader promised "to promote what was done well (and) correct what was done badly."

Lacalle Pou, who has promised to cap government

Turkey, Syria fighting escalates; refugees mass at EU border

KASTANIES, Greece (AP)—Thousands of migrants and refugees massed at Turkey's western frontier Sunday, trying to enter Greece by land and sea after Turkey said its borders were open to those hoping to head to Europe. In Syria, Turkish troops shot down two Syrian warplanes after the Syrian military downed a Turkish drone, a major escalation in the direct conflict between Syrian and Turkish forces.

Turkey's decision to ease border restrictions came amid a Russia-backed Syrian government offensive into Syria's northwestern Idlib province. That offensive has killed dozens of Turkish troops and led to a surge of nearly a million Syrian civilians fleeing the fighting toward Turkey's sealed border.

ed to do this on our own."

Erdogan's decision open his country's borders with Europe made good on a longstanding threat to let refugees into the continent. His announcement marked a dramatic departure from a previous policy of containment, an apparent attempt to pressure Europe into offering Turkey more support in dealing with the fallout from the Syrian war to its south.

Under a 6 billion euro deal in 2016, Turkey agreed to stem the tide of refugees to Europe in return for financial aid, after more than a million people entered Europe in 2015. Turkey has since accused the EU of failing to honor the agreement, and Erdogan has frequently threatened to allow refugees into Europe unless more international support was provided.

Turkey already hosts 3.6 million Syrian refugees, as well as many others from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Turkey borders Greece and Bulgaria, both European Union members.

On the Greek-Turkish land border, Greek army and police patrols using tear gas and stun grenades to thwart attempts by thousands to push into the country overnight.

Officials said the situation was much calmer Sunday morning. But in the afternoon, authorities used tear gas and water cannons to push back another crowd attempting to cross. Migrants threw rocks and other objects, and one policeman was injured. Greek authorities said they stopped about 10,000 crossing attempts Saturday, and another 5,500 on Sunday.

spending, said he wanted reduce the costs of production and services "to recover national competitiveness."

He said the country faces "an emergency" of insecurity, adding that "the enormous majority of Uruguayans feel unprotected." He campaigned on calls to bolster the country's security forces and toughening sentences.

"In the interior of the country we used to sleep with the door open.... Even vehicles were left with doors and windows open and the key in the ignition. But lately the houses are all fenced.... We hope that this government takes some measures and can change that," said Natalia Cardozo, a 37-year-old teacher who was participating on horseback in the inaugural day parade.

Lacalle Pou, who spent many years in Uruguay's congress, grew up in an intensely political family. His father Luis Lacalle Herrera was president from 1990 to 1995 and his mother, Julia Pou, was a senator. His great-grandfather Luis Alberto de Herrera was a major figure in the National Party.

He will have to depend on an ideologically diverse four-party coalition to get his programs through Congress.

Focus



AP

In this Jan. 4, 2020 file photo, Democratic presidential candidate and former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg pauses before answering a question as he campaigns in Nashua, N.H.

Inside the final month of Buttigieg's historic campaign

By STEVE PEOPLES and
THOMAS BEAUMONT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)—He opened February by sharing victory with one of the Democratic Party's best-known figures and ended it with a humbling defeat at the hands of another. Yet Pete Buttigieg's unlikely path over the last 30 days exceeded virtually everyone's expectations of his presidential ambitions, except perhaps his own.

The former mayor of Indiana's fourth largest city, an openly gay 38-year-old whose name most voters still can't pronounce, formally suspended his White House bid Sunday night. He did so acknowledging that he no longer had a viable path to the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, even after finishing in the top four in each of the first four contests of the 2020 primary season.

"By every historical measure, we were never supposed to get anywhere at all," Buttigieg reminded his hometown crowd, which was disappointed and hopeful at the same time. They interrupted his speech with chants of "2024."

Buttigieg began the month effectively in a first-place tie with progressive powerhouse

Bernie Sanders in Iowa's presidential caucuses. The mayor made history as the first openly gay candidate to earn a presidential delegate, never mind becoming the first to finish on top in any presidential primary contest.

He won over Iowa as a fresh-faced Democrat with a pragmatic Midwestern message backed by an aggressive strategy to reach voters in overlooked rural communities. And if not for the state's chaotic struggle to report its results, the Feb. 3 contest could have vaulted him to further heights.

Buttigieg and his competitors pivoted quickly to New Hampshire, where he was a decided underdog in a field that featured two neighboring senators and a former vice president. Yet the mayor from nearly 1,000 miles away showed surprising strength again.

He nearly tripled Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren's vote total and finished just one percentage point behind Sanders, the winner.

"You know, he very nearly pulled it off," said David Axelrod, who served as the senior adviser to former President Barack Obama and was at times an unofficial Buttigieg booster.

Axelrod cited Iowa's report-

ing fiasco and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar New Hampshire surge as key factors that limited Buttigieg's rise.

"If those two things would have been different, we would be having a different conversation now," he said.

Questions about Buttigieg's appeal with voters of color loomed over strong finishes in overwhelmingly white Iowa and New Hampshire, however. And as soon as the race shifted into more diverse terrain, Buttigieg's star began to fade.

In Nevada, he finished in third place behind Sanders and former Vice President Joe Biden, even as he bested two senators and a billionaire. And by the time the race moved to South Carolina a week later, Buttigieg's weakness with African-American voters was painfully exposed.

He failed to hit double digits in the first-in-the-South contest on Saturday, scoring a distant fourth place in a state in which more than half of Democratic primary voters were not white. Less than two hours after holding what would be his final rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, Buttigieg was hunkered on the phone in a hotel near Americus, Georgia, working out the details of ending his campaign, people familiar with

the conversation said.

On the phone with him were communications strategist Lis Smith, senior strategist Michael Halle, pollster Katie Connolly, media adviser Larry Grisalano, deputy campaign manager Hari Sevugan and longtime campaign manager Mike Schmul, according to aides familiar with the conversation who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to share internal discussions.

Having laid out a narrow but viable path to the nomination through an uncertain state-by-state fight, advisers painted a picture of a difficult road ahead.

After someone interjected that Buttigieg should speak, the candidate, known for an understated deliberative style, noted effectively that if the conversation had reached that point the decision was pretty clear.

Though there were details to work out about how to handle his appearances on Sunday news programs, the conversation quickly turned to the logistics of pulling down his Texas campaign events scheduled for Sunday and how to arrange for the speech in South Bend.

When discussion during the call turned to a possible endorsement, the team decided it might detract from what was a

speech heavy with references to Buttigieg's ground-breaking campaign and his eye on the future.

It marked a humbling end to a history-making month for the young Democrat, who could wait another 10 presidential elections to run again and still be the same age as the man who knocked him out of the race.

Buttigieg's decision reflected the urgency of the moment as establishment Democrats feared Sanders' rise might be unstoppable unless the party's moderate wing united behind Biden's candidacy. It also reflected the no-time-to-waste analytical nature of Buttigieg himself, a former Rhodes scholar who worked for the McKinsey & Company management consulting firm soon after finishing his Ivy League education.

"The truth is the path has narrowed to a close for our candidacy if not for our cause," Buttigieg told supporters in South Bend. "We must recognize that at this point in the race, the best way to keep faith with those goals and ideals is to step aside and help bring our party and country together."

He didn't endorse any of the six candidates still in the race, though he and Biden traded

voicemails on Sunday. Buttigieg has spent the past several weeks warning that nominating Sanders would be risky.

And as the first openly gay candidate to seriously contend for the presidency, he nodded to the historic nature of his campaign. He kissed his husband, Chasten, as he walked onto the stage and offered a message for children who might be watching.

"We send a message to every kid out there wondering if whatever marks them out as different means they are somehow destined to be less than," Buttigieg said. "To see that someone who once felt that exact same way can become a leading American presidential candidate with his husband by his side."

Meanwhile, Axelrod said "the Pete Buttigieg story isn't over."

"He's 38 years old," the former Obama strategist said. "He's vaulted himself into the national conversation. He obviously has work to do on some things that—some weaknesses we've seen in this election—but whenever there is a conversation again about Democratic candidates, he'll be in that conversation. And that's a remarkable achievement, given where he started a year ago."

Overdrive

By SCOTT STURGIS
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

2020 Subaru Outback Premium: A new take on love?

Price: \$32,900 as tested. A package adding moonroof, premium navigation, blind-spot detection and hands-free rear gate cost \$2,995.

Conventional wisdom: Car and Driver likes: "Competent off-road, spacious rear seat, leading-edge tech features." Dislikes: "Ho-hum powertrains, slow design evolution, occasionally sluggish CVT."

Marketer's pitch: "Go where love takes you."

Reality: Subaru has often made its cars about love and freedom, which nicely deflects us away from the fact that cars are mostly about bills and aggravation (traffic, insurance, repairs, long commutes). But

AUTO REVIEW:

(SUBARU/TNS)

The 2020 Subaru Outback gets more power from an optional turbocharged engine. But it retains its distinct look, and the old four-cylinder still works well and saves fuel.

Under the Hood: Keep those headlight lenses clean!

Q: Regarding my 2000 Acura model TL, I've been told my front light shields need cleaning. I am wondering what you would recommend for improving nighttime safety. I could clean them myself, but I was told that is hard work and I'm in my 80s. The car-wash does cleaning at \$89. I am hoping there is an easier/lower cost solution. Do you know if there is one?

A: It sounds like your composite headlight housings have deteriorated so that the light is somewhat obscured. The outer lens is integrated into the lamp housing and is constructed of

this Outback is kind of lovable.

What's new: The Outback grows a little and gets a new engine option and a larger touchscreen option.

Up to speed: The 182-horsepower 2.5-liter boxer four-cylinder will run the Outback to 60 mph in 8.5 seconds, according to Car and Driver.

The XT models get a 2.4-liter turbo boxer that creates a whopping (for Subaru) 260 horses. It shaves the 0-to-60 time to 6.3 seconds.

Shiftless: Any power sapping could be traced to the CVT, at least from the low end—0 to 30 felt like forever.

Even with paddle shifters providing gearish choices, speed is sacrificed to the gods of smoothness.

On the road: The Outback has the old familiar steady-as-she-goes Subaru handling.

Though not sporty, the Outback is enjoyable racing along country lanes and gliding smoothly down highways.

In the weather, though, the Outback did lose its grip on rainy surfaces fairly quickly. I know I wasn't asking too much of the Outback. I may roar on the dry pavement, but I drive much more gingerly in the rain. It just felt as if the tires weren't up to the task.

Driver's Seat: Subaru doesn't make the cheap seats feel cheap. The cloth seats in the test vehicle provided plenty of comfort and support, with enough grip to keep one in place. Gets my vote.

Friends and stuff: The rear seat is not a bad place to be at all. It sits up higher than the front and offers plenty of comfort in the seat itself. Legroom and foot room are generous; only headroom is a bit compromised by the tall seat bottom. Center passengers will suffer

a large hump courtesy of the beauty of all-wheel drive.

Cargo space is 35.7 cubic feet with the seats up—that's almost as much as a Buick Encore with the seats down—and a whopping 75.7 with the seats down.

Play some tunes: The Subaru Outback gets a whole new (for the whole company) infotainment system that has more than a passing resemblance to Volvo's attractive touchscreen. The optional 11.6-inch vertical layout touchscreen looks big and inviting.

Operation is a mixed bag. Knobs control volume and tuning, but almost everything else requires a visit to Touchscreenland. Many of the buttons there are big and easy to find, but operating the equalizer and using CarPlay mean waiting until the next red light—too small and dangerous to other drivers. (If only the truly dangerous drivers would learn to follow these

simple steps....)

Sound quality is an A-minus. It's clear and crisp, but it rides way too far up the scale, making bass sound like guitar and guitar sound like mandolin or ukulele. It's like a music box for your Subaru, and it all seems to emanate from the console itself, like a 1973 Ford LTD single-speaker AM-only radio.

In any case, the buzzing of the horizontally opposed four is pleasant enough to listen to as well.

Keeping warm and cool: The only control function offered outside the touchscreen is temperature control. This poses a problem in two ways: 1. Upon startup, the blower offers the latest settings until the screen fully activates, which takes longer when the car is too hot—and presumably when it's too cold. 2. The fan controls are smaller than my pinkie and also should wait

until I stop the vehicle. Grr. And sometimes brrr.

Fuel economy: I averaged about 28 mpg in the usual Mr. Driver's Seat circuit around Southeastern Pennsylvania. Feed the Outback whatever.

Where it's built: Lafayette, Ind.

How it's built: Consumer Reports gives the Outback a predicted reliability of 4 out of 5, where it's mostly been, except for a blip of 2 out of 5 in 2018.

In the end: The Outback remains an affable companion, easy to live with and nice to drive, with plenty of room, and that fuel economy is a real bonus. I've since tried the other engine in a Legacy, and it drove fuel economy pretty far south.

I'd double-check that wet-weather handling on a test drive, and maybe you'll find out I did something wrong. Here's hoping, because the Outback gets my vote otherwise.

By BRAD BERGHOLDT
Tribune News Service

Brad Bergholdt is an automotive technology instructor at Evergreen Valley College in San Jose, Calif. Readers may send him email at bradbergholdt@gmail.com; he cannot make personal replies.



a polycarbonate plastic, which deteriorates over time due to UV light and other environmental conditions.

According to a study by AAA, cloudy lenses can reduce the light output by quite a bit more than most might think, so this is good to do, especially with mature night vision! In a typical case, polishing the lenses is usually quite productive, although the results may last for perhaps a year or two before treatment is again needed. You have four options: a home remedy, an over-the-counter lens restoration kit, professional restora-

tion or replacing the housing.

Spending 10 minutes employing some toothpaste and an old/wet kitchen sponge may improve the cloudiness by perhaps 25%. Further work wet-sanding with very fine grit sandpaper (600 grit, then 2000 grit, then finish some polishing compound) will likely bring the level of improvement much higher.

Buying a restoration kit at an auto parts store or online and employing similar elbow grease is another option, and following the instructions may provide reassurance of a proper procedure. Highly rated kits

are Turtle Wax T-240KT (inexpensive bang for the buck) and Meguiar's G2000 (pricey, better results), among others. Mother's PowerPlastic4lights 8808 is a \$10 polish and protectant that might be employed instead of the toothpaste or as an occasional touchup/maintenance strategy. Perhaps there's a neighbor kid with oodles of energy?

Professional polishing may be your best bet, as the results will likely exceed the considerable effort needed to bring your lamp housings up to a high level of clarity. Spending \$40-45 per lamp isn't that bad

to get the best possible results. Replacement of the lamp housings is also an option if they're in really bad shape, but this can be quite expensive. They run about \$250 each (original equipment) or about \$75 each for aftermarket parts, with around two hours labor needed for replacement plus another half hour for aiming.

If it were me, I would attempt a little home treatment (with, say, Mothers polish) and see how that goes. If you don't get the results that you hoped for, the car wash folks are the next thing to try.

Life & Style

Virus fears close down France's famed

Louvre Museum



AP
Tourists stand outside the Louvre museum, in Paris, France, Sunday, March 1, 2020.

PARIS (AP)—The spreading coronavirus epidemic shut down France's Louvre Museum on Sunday, with workers who guard its famous trove of artworks fearful of being contaminated by the museum's flow of tourists from around the world.

Almost three-quarters of the Louvre's 9.6 million visitors last year came from abroad. The world's most popular museum welcomes tens of thousands of fans daily in Paris.

"We are very worried because we have visitors from everywhere," said Andre Sacristin, a Louvre employee and union representative.

"The risk is very, very, very

great," he said in a phone interview. While there are no known virus infections among the museum's 2,300 workers, "it's only a question of time," he said.

A short statement from the Louvre said a staff meeting about virus prevention efforts stopped the museum from opening as scheduled Sunday morning.

Amid intermittent rain, would-be visitors waited to get inside, but the Louvre later announced it would not open at all on Sunday.

Among the frustrated visitors was Charles Lim from Singapore. He and his wife, Jeanette, chose Paris to cel-

lbrate their first wedding anniversary and bought tickets in advance for the Louvre, home to the "Mona Lisa" and other famous artworks. He posted a video on Twitter of the long lines of people waiting to get in.

"We waited for about 3 hours before giving up," he told The Associated Press. "It was incredibly disappointing."

The shutdown followed a French government decision Saturday to ban indoor public gatherings of more than 5,000 people.

Sacristin said the new measure banning large indoor gatherings exacerbated the fears of Louvre workers

that they might be in danger of contamination. Louvre staffers were also concerned about museum workers from northern Italy who had come to the museum to collect works by Leonardo da Vinci that were loaned for a major exhibition, he said.

Italy, with over 1,600 coronavirus cases and 34 deaths, has been the epicenter of the outbreak in Europe.

France raised its number of reported cases to 130 on Sunday, 30 more than the day before. More than half of France's regions now have at least one case, and the new patients include one in the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe,

the first in France's overseas territories. Two people with the virus have died in France, and 12 have recovered, the director of the national health agency Jerome Salomon said Sunday.

Most cases can be traced to growing clusters around the country or to people who traveled to virus-hit areas, but authorities are investigating 23 cases whose origin is not yet clear.

Another meeting about virus prevention at the Louvre is scheduled for Monday be-

tween union representatives and the museum management.

Sacristin, who will be taking part, said museum visitors should be subjected to health checks to protect staffers and if any cases of coronavirus contamination are confirmed "then the museum should be closed."

Workers have asked for masks to be distributed but so far have been given only an alcohol-based solution to disinfect their hands, he said.

"That didn't please us at all," he said.

'The Invisible Man' tops box office with \$29 million haul

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Elisabeth Moss-led thriller "The Invisible Man" rode a wave of good reviews to a very visible spot atop the box office this weekend.

Universal Pictures on Sunday estimated that the film from writer-director Leigh Whannell earned \$29 million from North American theaters. Internationally, the Blumhouse production picked up an additional \$20.2 million.

Whannell helped dust off the classic H.G. Wells story and update it for modern audiences by focusing on Moss' victim character instead of the Invisible Man character, who here is an abusive ex-boyfriend.

"The Invisible Man" carried a relatively modest budget, costing under \$10 million to produce, and exceeded expectations by a few million dollars. The film, which had been well-received by critics, drew diverse audiences to the theaters (46% Caucasian, 20% African American and 18% Hispanic), according to exit polls.

"We couldn't be more pleased," said Jim Orr, Universal's president of domestic distribution. "(Whannell) brought this century-old character to life in a very clever and relevant way."

The studio expects it to continue to play well into March, although it will have some extra competition when "A Quiet Place Part II" opens on March 20.

Paramount Pictures' "Sonic the Hedgehog" slid to second place in its third weekend in theaters adding \$16 million and bringing its domestic total to \$128.3 million. "The Call of the Wild," with Harrison Ford, placed third in its second weekend with \$13.2 million.

Fourth place went to the anime superhero film "My Hero Academia: Heroes Rising" which opened to \$6.3 million from just 1,260 screens.

Teen sexual assault victim seeks closure after 50 years

DEAR ABBY: Fifty years ago, at the age of 17, I was raped by a high school classmate. At the time, I was living in an apartment with a friend, "Becky." She and three male classmates witnessed the attack, stood by and did nothing. (They were drunk.)

I never reported the assault because I was scared, embarrassed and ashamed. No one ever spoke about it, and Becky and I went our separate ways. I eventually married, moved away from my hometown and tried to put the incident behind me.

Fifteen years ago, I moved back and married a local man. I see all those people frequently around town, which reminds me of that terrible night. I don't think it's fair that I have had to live with this for 50 years while the others appear to have forgotten and gone on their merry way. None of them ever apologized or acknowledged their part in the attack. I remember it as vividly as if it were last week.

I would like to confront those involved. A friend suggested I privately confront my attacker. I believe calling out these people will give me peace of mind. My husband and I are planning to move out of the area, so I will never have to see any of them again. Should I confront all of them or just my attacker? Or should I let sleeping dogs lie?

ASSAULTED IN IDAHO

DEAR ASSAULTED: Before deciding whether to confront these people after 50 years or let sleeping dogs lie,

what I think you should do is discuss what happened with a licensed therapist, specifically one who works with patients who have PTSD. Whereas a half-century ago there was a tendency to blame the victims of sexual assault, we have come a long way since then, and help is available for you if you're willing to get it.

A way to find help in making this important decision would be to contact RAINN (rainn.org). The toll-free phone number is 800-656-4673. RAINN is the free, confidential national sexual assault hotline, and it's available 24/7.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a beautiful 77-year-old woman in excellent health who has fun traveling internationally. I will soon be taking my oldest daughter to Europe at my expense because I want a companion.

I'm 19 years older than she is. She also is in great health and has a fun-loving personality. We look like sisters and have fun together wherever we go. However, I don't want her to call me "Mom" while we are out in public places. Can I ask her not to call me that?

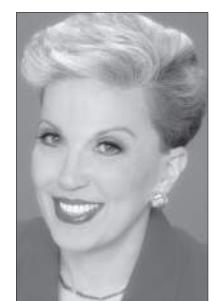
She is stubborn and always has been, but I love her and want her around while I'm traveling, rather than friends. She's single, but I'm not. My husband can't go because of health issues.

I need my daughter to go with me. Can you give me some ideas on how to approach her to not call me "Mom" in pub-

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



lic? What if she refuses to go with me?

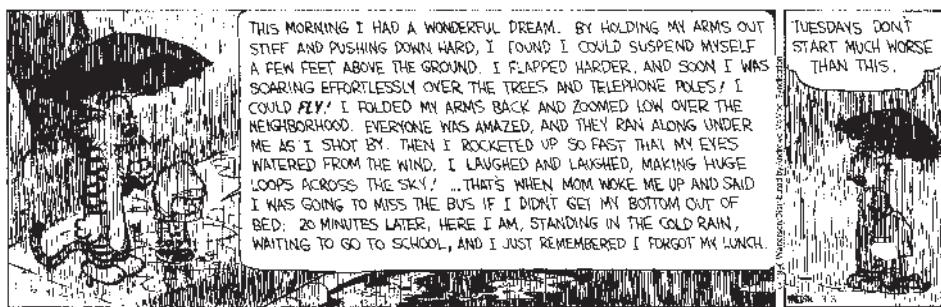
ONE STIPULATION IN THE SOUTH

DEAR STIPULATION: I can't help but wonder why not being called "Mom" is so important to you. I have read your letter several times, and I'm struck by the fact that it's all about YOU and what YOU want. Your daughter is long past 21, and I'm sure she can make her own decisions. You can ask her not to call you "Mom," but whether she will agree and won't forget to not address you that way is anyone's guess. Old habits die hard.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby - Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes



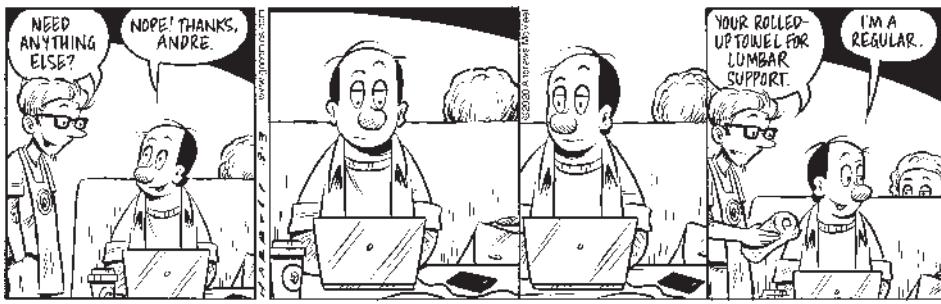
By Bill Watterson

Garfield®



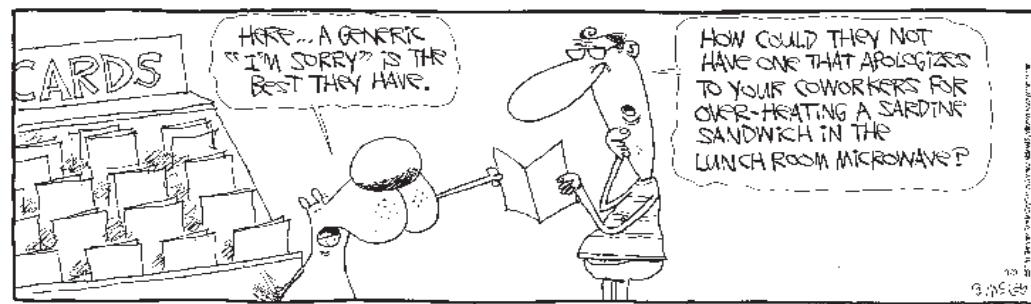
By Jim Davis

Adam@home



By Bryan Basset

The Duplex



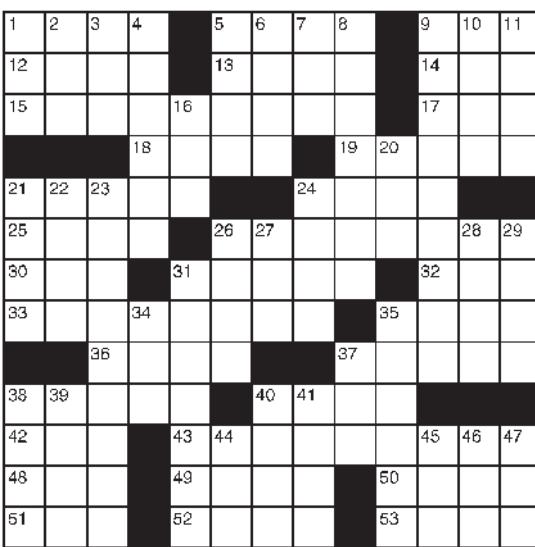
By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	38	Dorm	3	Right	22	High-end
1 Gridlock	alternatives	40	angle	23	hotel	chain
5 50-and-over org.	40 Saharan	42	quarterback	Psychological	tactics	
9 Deli choice	flight	5	Manning	cave	creatures	
12 Wheel bar	43 Super-shiny, like	6	Farm unit	26	Excellent,	in slang
13 — En-lai	paint	7	Cries of discovery	27	Myrna	of movies
14 "Suits" network	48 Census stat	8	King, in Cannes	28	Carolina college	
15 Object of an epic pursuit	49 One of HOMES	9	Grooved wheels	29	Dog food brand	
17 Tom Collins liquor	50 Rocker Clapton	10	"Love, Actually" actor	31	Made a rustling noise	
18 Alliances	51 Cooking fuel	11	India's continent	34	"Mangia!"	
19 Lindsay of "Mean Girls"	52 Carvey or Delany	12	"Death in Venice" author	35	Musical mix	
21 Some Pacific salmon	53 Bigfoot's cousin	16	USO patrons	37	Showbiz job	
24 Floating ice mass	DOWN	20	Mouths (Lat.)	38	Banner	
25 Portent	1 "Humbug!"	21	Atlantic catches	39	Sitarist's music	
26 Romper room	2 Outer (Pref.)	22		40	Opposite of "fer"	
30 Genetic stuff		23		41	Mother of Zeus	
31 Attempts		24		44	Playwright Levin	
32 100%		25		45	Raw mineral	
33 Laterally		26		46	Perch	
35 L-Q bridge		27		47	High school subj.	
36 Pace		28				
37 "I — kick from champagne ..."		29				
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Yesterday's answer 3-3



For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5956 99¢ per minute, touchtone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

STUMPED?

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY:

Jessica Biel, 38; Julie Bowen, 50; Tone Loc, 54; Jackie Joyner-Kersee, 58.

Happy Birthday: Deal with emotional matters swiftly. If something isn't fixable, have enough sense to walk away. You have far too much to lose if you let others interfere in your life and pursuits. Take the path that will encourage satisfaction, happiness and a bright future. Change begins within; don't sit on the sideline, waiting for someone to take over. Your numbers are 3, 10, 16, 24, 32, 40, 47.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Resolving issues will require compromise if you want to keep the peace. How you display what you have to offer will have to be authentic and accessible for others to understand. Don't make promises you cannot keep. Romance is in the stars. ★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Get your priorities straight, and you will achieve what you set out to do. Ample preparation will ease stress and ensure your success. Don't leave a last-minute change in the hands of someone else. Leave nothing to chance. ★★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Your persuasive jargon will result in an emotional battle. Make sure you know and understand what you are saying. Charm may get you a step ahead, but if you don't have the facts to back up your claims, you'll be stepping backward. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): High energy, coupled with unique ideas, will get you moving in the right direction. Com-

mon sense and less drama will help you convince others to get on board and assist you in reaching your objective. Meetings will bring better results than anticipated. ★★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Finish what you start. If you flit from one thing to another, you will end up going in circles. Don't believe what you hear. Joint ventures will not turn out as anticipated. Your charm alone won't help you seal a deal. ★★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Discuss what you want to do with the people you know will give you good advice. Someone with more experience will offer a suggestion that will encourage you to put your plans in motion. A partnership will fuel your creativity. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Don't venture off the beaten track. Stick to the basics, take care of your responsibilities and avoid getting into discussions with people who don't share your opinions. Schedule rest, and adopt a healthy lifestyle that supports your hectic routine. ★★★★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): The people you bring into your circle will inspire you. A change to the way you approach life will improve your attitude as well as your performance. Greater respect for someone will develop and bring you closer. ★★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Don't wait for approval to move forward on your own. You'll be led astray by someone who doesn't want to see you succeed. Put greater emphasis on the way you look and how you present yourself to the world. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): High energy, coupled with unique ideas, will get you moving in the right direction. Com-

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): A change will be enlightening. Taking a new approach to an old idea will help you see flaws that weren't apparent in the past. A shift in attitude will help you adjust to a healthier, happier lifestyle. Let go of the past. ★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Test your ideas, and make changes that will help you explore new possibilities. A project can turn into a prosperous sideline business with a little thought and adjustment to your space that accommodates what you want to pursue. ★★★★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Choose to use charm and a positive attitude to get what you want. If you let someone bring you down, it will ruin your day and stifle your prospects. Project what you want, and make it happen. You are overdue for a change. ★★★

Birthday Baby: You are unique, trendy and relentless. You are engaging and farsighted.

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

1			7			2		
7			8	9			3	
	2				7			
4			5	1		8		
3					1			7
	4		8					
6		4	7					
9		7	4			5		
3		6			7			

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

8	2	7	6	9	5	1	4	3
1	6	5	4	8	3	7	9	2
9	3	4	1	2	7	8	6	5
6	5	2	7	3	1	9	8	4
3	4	9	8	6	2	5	7	1
7	1	8	9	5	4	3	2	6
5	8	6	2	1	9	4	3	7
2	7	3	5	4	8	6	1	9
4	9	1	3	7	6	2	5	8

Difficult Level: ★★★

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUVELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backwords. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

LOVELY LADIES

A	A	N	A	I	①	I	L	O	U	R	D	E	S	L
Y	D	I	N	A	②	L	L	I	L	O	R	E	N	I
C	A	N	D	U	③	L	U	L	I	T	A	Y	A	

LeBron outduels Zion as Lakers beat Pelicans



NEW ORLEANS (AP)—LeBron James keeps finding ways to assert his supremacy over the upstart New Orleans Pelicans and rookie sensation Zion Williamson—with or without the help of fellow Lakers All-Star Anthony Davis.

James had 34 points, 13 assists and 12 rebounds, and Los Angeles overcame both Davis' absence and Williamson's highest-scoring game to beat New Orleans 122-114 on Sunday night.

"Obviously, a spectacular performance by LeBron James," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "His shot-making was ridiculous from both in the post, with turnaround jump shots, and at the 3-point line."

"When they brought double-teams, he is one of the best passers in the league," Vogel added. "He showed it tonight and picked their defense apart."

Williamson finished with 35 points, but his largely productive and highlight-filled night was marred somewhat by six turnovers.

Kyle Kuzma scored 20, including a corner 3-pointer set up by James that put the Lakers up 113-109 with 3:40 to go. The Lakers gradually pulled away after that, aided by James' 3 with 2:27 left.

"He is who he is—an incredible player," Williamson said of James. "I give respect when it's due. He hit a big shot and it helped them seal the game."

Davis, who spent the first seven of his eight seasons with New Orleans, sat out with a sore right knee, one night after playing in the Lakers' 105-88 loss at Memphis. His injury did not appear too serious; he was on the bench in street clothes and routinely reacted to the action on the court by springing out of his seat and



AP

Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) passes the ball between New Orleans Pelicans guard Jrue Holiday (11) and guard Frank Jackson (15) in the first half of an NBA game in New Orleans, Sunday, March 1, 2020.

standing on the sideline.

Bucks 93, Hornets 85

In Charlotte, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 41 points, 20 rebounds and six assists and Milwaukee beat the Hornets for its sixth straight victory.

Brook Lopez added 16 points and seven rebounds for the NBA (equals) leading Bucks. They've won 20 of their last 22 games and improved to 52-8.

Antetokounmpo scored in almost every way imaginable -- on pick-and-rolls, fast-break dunks, fadeaway jumpers and from the foul line.

Antetokounmpo finished a rebound short of his career high. The Bucks outrebounded the Hornets 61-47.

Devonte Graham had 17 points for Charlotte.

Clippers 136, 76ers 130

In Los Angeles, Kawhi Leonard scored 30 points, Paul George added 24 and Los Angeles beat Philadelphia to extend its winning streak to four.

Reserves Montrezl Harrell and Lou Williams also had 24 points. The Clippers—who shot 59.2% from the field—trailed by two at halftime but

took control in the third quarter, outscoring the Sixers 38-24.

Shake Milton led Philadelphia with 39 points, hitting seven 3-pointers. The first-year guard had 26 points in the first half, which tied a team season high. Former Clippers forward Tobias Harris had 25 points and Alec Burks 15.

Mavericks 111, Timberwolves 91

In Minneapolis, Kristaps Porzingis had a season-high 38 points and grabbed 13 rebounds, Seth Curry scored 27 points and Dallas rolled past Minnesota with Mavericks

star Luka Doncic sitting out with a left thumb sprain.

Tim Hardaway Jr. added 19 points to help the Mavericks win for the third time in four games.

D'Angelo Russell had 16 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Minnesota. The Timberwolves lost for the 20th time in 22 games.

Nuggets 133, Raptors 118

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 18 rebounds and 11 assists for his 12th triple-double of the season to lead the Nuggets past short-handed Toronto.

Jokic has 43 triple-doubles in

his short career, completing his latest by feeding Jerami Grant on a dunk that helped the Nuggets the defending champion Raptors their third straight loss.

Grant finished with 16 points, Toronto played without Serge Ibaka and Fred VanVleet for a second straight game, but got a career night from OG Anunoby. He had 32 points on 12-of-16 shooting.

Wizards 124, Warriors 110

In San Francisco, Bradley Beal had 34 points, eight assists and a season-best five steals and Washington won at Golden State for the first time in six years.

Beal has scored at least 25 points in a franchise-record 18 straight games.

Andrew Wiggins scored 27 points for Golden State. The Warriors have lost nine straight at home.

Kings 106, Pistons 100

In Sacramento, De'Aaron Fox scored 11 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter and the Kings overcame a 17-point deficit to beat Detroit.

Buddy Hield added 19 points, Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 15 and Harrison Barnes had 10 points and eight rebounds for Sacramento. The Kings have won four of five since the All-Star break.

Christian Wood had 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Pistons. They lost point guard Derrick Rose to an apparent ankle injury in the first quarter.



Lance McCullers struck out Paul Goldschmidt on curveball, then looked toward the Houston dugout.

That was enough on this day.

After being out of the game for more than a year, 16 pitches were plenty Sunday.

Sidelined since having Tommy John surgery in November 2018, McCullers started in a spring training game against St. Louis and faced three batters. He retired leadoff man Kolten Wong on a soft comebacker, gave up a double to Paul DeJong and fanned Goldschmidt with an 84 mph curve.

"Out of the 16 pitches I threw, really only maybe one or two that I didn't execute the way I was hoping to pre-pitch," McCullers said. "Really happy with just the way I

McCullers, Kluber back on mound after injuries, deGrom sharp

feels overall and just being out there with the guys."

McCullers' fastball reached 94 mph on the scoreboard radar gun. His signature pitch is the curve.

"It's been the easiest to get the feel back for," he said. "I'm still working on my four-seam, trying to get the four-seam back. I was happy with the way I was moving it around today in the zone."

McCullers' healthy return to the starting rotation is a priority for the Astros, so they're being cautious.

Justin Verlander and Zack Greinke provide a formidable duo at the top of the rotation. With the departure of free agents Gerrit Cole (New York Yankees) and Wade Miley (Cincinnati), McCullers fig-

ures to fill the third spot in the rotation.

Several candidates, none of whom have started more than eight major league games in a season, are competing for the final two spots.

A 26-year-old righty, McCullers has started 22 games three times during his four MLB seasons, but never more than that. He posted a 7-4 record with a 4.25 ERA during Houston's 2017 championship season, a title tainted by the Astros' sign-stealing scheme.

McCullers' previous outing against big league hitters was in relief on Oct. 17, 2018, in the AL Championship Series against Boston.

"He was smooth with his delivery," manager Dusty Baker said following Hous-

ton's 5-4 victory. "He wasn't overthrowing, which I thought he might do from not being out there."

More tests for Judge

New York Yankees star Aaron Judge is scheduled to have additional tests Monday as the team tries to pinpoint the cause of soreness in his right shoulder.

Judge underwent an MRI Saturday, which was negative.

The right fielder has been receiving treatment at Steinbrenner Field in Tampa.

"They worked on him a lot," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said Sunday. "So, I'd say we were a little encouraged this morning."

Judge was shut down from hitting a week before spring

training after experiencing soreness while swinging. There is discomfort located under the right pectoral muscle near the shoulder, which returned Friday when he took batting practice in an indoor cage for the second consecutive day.

"Where's it coming from? What's generating that?" Boone said.

Judge has no issues while throwing.

Betts in the clear

Even if the Boston Red Sox are penalized as a result of MLB's sign-stealing investigation, it looks like Mookie Betts will be in the clear.

Before trading for Betts last month, the Los Angeles Dodgers were assured by the league there was nothing to be con-

cerned about when it comes to their new superstar outfielder, according to Joel Sherman of The New York Post.

If Betts indeed is exonerated, then we probably can expect the same for other players from the 2018 World Series champion Red Sox roster.

Any punishment that comes Boston's way is expected to be light. Multiple players from the '18 team, including J.D. Martinez, Andrew Benintendi, and Ian Kinsler have been adamant about their innocence.

As for when to expect a resolution to MLB's investigation, that remains unclear. Last week, it was reported the result could come in early March. Sherman notes MLB isn't expected to announce its findings this week, but it likely will before the regular season gets underway March 26.

Pats may get Bengals' Dalton if Brady leaves

BOSTON—New England Patriots fans are still hopeful that Tom Brady will re-sign with the team this offseason and finish his career in Foxboro.

But if the 42-year-old does decide to move on (which is looking increasingly plausible), how will the Patriots proceed at the quarterback position?

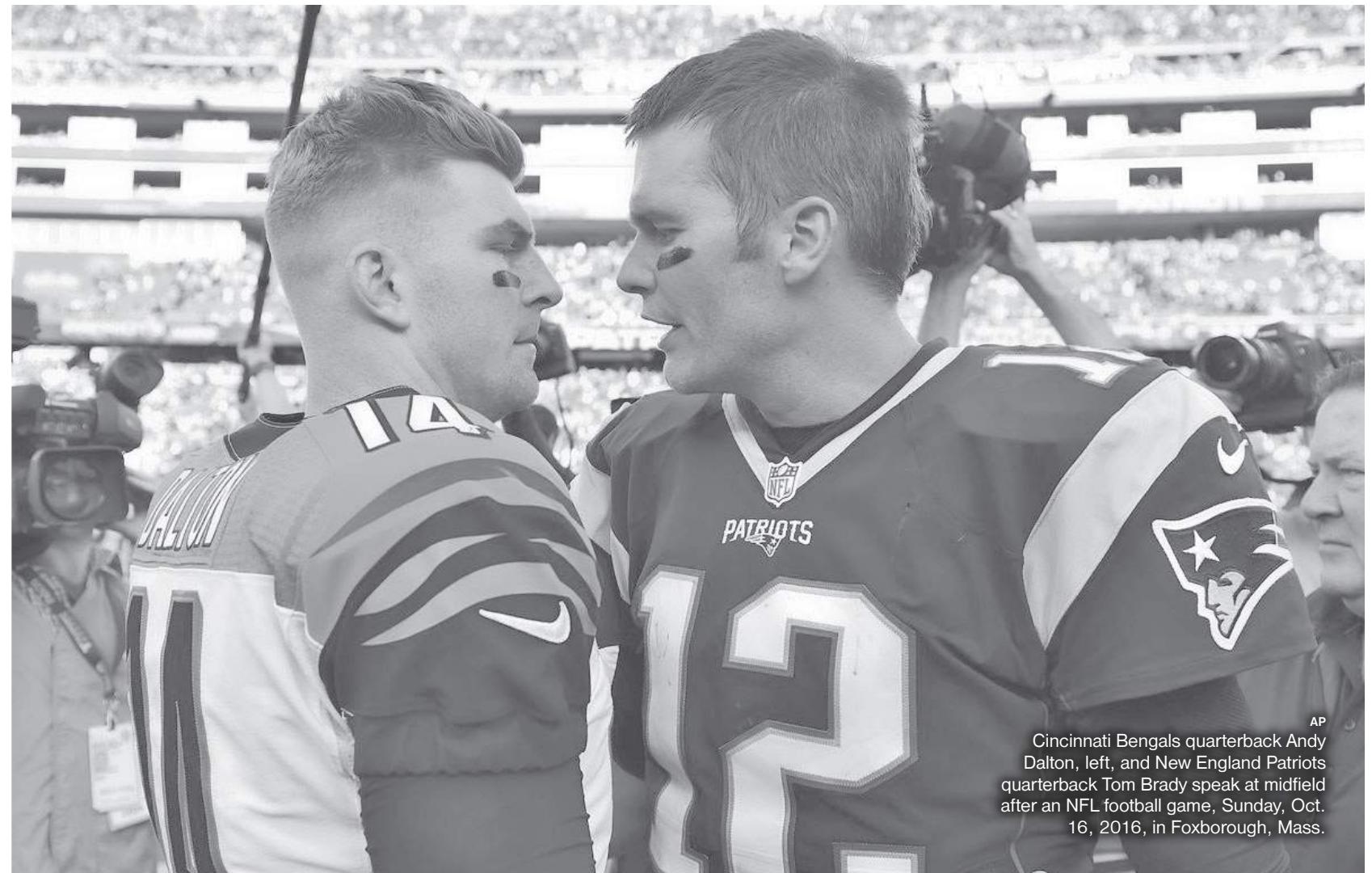
An obvious option is backup QB Jarrett Stidham, who was selected in the fourth round of the 2019 NFL Draft. Or, New England could look to the trade market where they'll likely find a serviceable veteran.

According to NFL Network's Ian Rapoport, Cincinnati Bengals QB Andy Dalton could be part of the Patriots' backup plan if they don't end up bringing Brady back.

"If the Patriots lose Tom Brady, one of their backup plans may end up being Andy Dalton," Rapoport said Sunday on NFL Network. "So it may not be something that's on the front burner, but it does sound like Dalton eventually will be traded this offseason."

With the Bengals presumably taking LSU QB Joe Burrow with the No. 1 overall pick in this year's draft, they'll have little use for Dalton going forward. The 32-year-old is coming off a down season in which he went 2-11 in 13 games with 16 touchdowns and 14 interceptions. It's worth noting, however, that Dalton played without A.J. Green all season as well as John Ross for most of the campaign due to injuries.

Dalton is entering the last



Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton, left, and New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady speak at midfield after an NFL football game, Sunday, Oct. 16, 2016, in Foxborough, Mass. AP

year of his contract and is set to make \$17.5 million in 2020.

Brady will officially become a free agent March 18 if he and the Patriots don't agree to an extension before then.

Combine's speed week ends with another fast finish

In Indianapolis, college football's top players turned the NFL's annual scouting combine into speed week.

Running back Jonathan Taylor promised to run the

40-yard dash in under 4.4 seconds. He did. Receiver Henry Ruggs III came, literally, a few ticks away from matching the fastest time recorded in the event's 35-year history. Linebacker Isaiah Simmons showed he had receiver-type speed on Saturday, and even the big men turned heads with their fleet feet.

On Sunday, the trend continued with cornerback Javien Guidry of Utah clocking a 4.29—the best on the final day of workouts in Indianapolis

and tied for third-best among defensive backs since 2003. Only Jalen Myrick of Minnesota in 2017 and Stanford Routt in 2005 posted faster times.

"It was a 4.28 at a Texas camp my sophomore year," Guidry said earlier this week when asked what his fastest 40 was. "I really focused on it (track) when we moved to Texas. Coach Larry Weathers in Austin, he really put it on me to focus on track and running and DB drills as well. He's a DB coach, but running

was the main thing."

Guidry did more than that in Indy. He also posted 21 reps on the 225-pound bench press, tied for fifth among defensive backs.

Jeff Okudah, widely considered the best cornerback in April's draft, didn't have the kind of day he expected.

The former Ohio State player did only 11 reps on the bench press and posted a 4.48 in the 40 before hitting the Lucas Oil Stadium turf while trying to make a spin-

ning catch during one drill. He complained of head and neck soreness, sat out some of the workout, before returning to deliver the best broad jump of the day at 11 feet, 3 inches and a 41-inch vertical jump.

"It's kind of like there's risk-reward for everything," he said before working out. "For me, it's no different than going out against Tee Higgins all game. It's always going to be risk-reward. You chose if you're going to get the reward or if you're going to get the risk."

If Im was worried, it didn't show.

Im took a couple looks at his downhill line, took his putter back just a couple of inches and watched the ball roll in for a birdie that allowed him to reclaim his lead at 6 under—which, he hoped, created a bit of relief at home.

"Right now, all I can do is pray for the best and just hope moving forward that not many more people get affected," Im said. "Hopefully, this virus can calm down and sort itself out very soon."

Honda will remain the tournament's namesake for a 40th consecutive year in 2021, extending the longest current run of title-sponsorship on tour. Grayson Murray, who was 4 under on the par-3 17th in his first three rounds with an ace on Saturday, put his tee ball there in the water Sunday and made double bogey. For the third consecutive year, no player had four rounds in the 60s on the par-70 track.



PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (AP)—Moments after getting his first career PGA Tour win, Sungjae Im took a moment to reflect on what it means.

Not for himself—for his homeland, and for those dealing with a virus that has the world on edge.

The 21-year-old South Korean started fast and finished stronger Sunday, winning The Honda Classic by one shot over Mackenzie Hughes and two over Tommy Fleetwood for his first victory in 50 tries on tour. But before he could be whisked back to the course to collect the trophy, Im made sure to speak out about the coronavirus and tell those in South Korea—where nearly 4,000 cases have been confirmed—that he was thinking of them.

"Over in Korea right now, I know a lot of people are dealing with the coronavirus," Im said. "And it's kind of a huge deal with everybody. But I'm

With virus in mind, Korea's Sungjae Im wins Honda Classic

just glad as a Korean player that I can deliver some good news to the countrymen back home ... to do something for the country and make everybody proud."

Im shot a 4-under 66 on Sunday, finishing at 6 under to match the second-highest winning score since the Honda moved to PGA National in 2007. He was the tour's rookie of the year last season, plus has played more tournaments and more rounds than anyone since the 2018-19 season began nearly a year and a half ago.

And now, he's a winner, picking up \$1.26 million this week and becoming the Honda's 10th international champion in the last 16 seasons.

Im birdied four of his first five holes, then birdied two of the final four—after sticking tee shots on the tough par-3 15 and 17th holes within 8 feet both times—to finish off the victory.

Hughes, a Canadian who

made the cut on the number Friday, shot his second consecutive 66. Playing alongside Im, he was part of some serious fireworks on the last two holes and missed a birdie putt at the par-5 finishing hole that would have gotten him into a tie for the top spot.

"I love being in the mix," Hughes said. "I love having a chance to win, and yeah, it sucks to come up one short, to fight that hard all day. I just kind of thought I was going to do it. But still proud of the way I fought this week."

Fleetwood (71) was alone in third and is still seeking his first PGA Tour win. He started the day one shot clear of the field and started birdie-birdie to get to 7 under at that point—matching what was the low score in relation to par of the week.

Then PGA National did what it usually does, that being not let anyone run away from the pack.

Fleetwood made bogey on the par-4 6th and couldn't get up and down from a greenside bunker on the par-4 8th, giving back what was left of his lead at that point. Fleetwood birdied the par-3 17th to get within one, but his approach at the par-5 finishing hole found the water to all but seal his fate.

"I was going well," Fleetwood said. "My swing wasn't there today. It wasn't like a comfortable day ... things weren't quite there, but I hung in well."

Once Fleetwood's attempt at a miracle hole-out after a drop from 120 yards on 18 didn't fall, Im could finally exhale as the winner. He hugged his caddie in the locker room, where he watched the last 20 minutes or so on a monitor.

"I've been in this spot many times. ... I just felt like the experience really helped," Im said through a translator.

Some of Im's best moments have come when no one has

been looking.

He was third at the Zozo Championship in Japan last October, a finish totally overshadowed by Tiger Woods tying the PGA Tour record of 82 career victories. And in November he went 3-1-1 to tie for the best showing by a player on the International team at the Presidents Cup, but the U.S. team captained by Woods rallied in singles on the final day to win the trophy at Royal Melbourne.

But this time, he was on center stage and embraced the moment.

Hughes and Im went to the par-3 17th green—the end of the "Bear Trap" three-hole stretch—in wildly different spots. Im stuck his tee ball to just inside of 8 feet, while Hughes had nearly 55 feet left from above the hole.

Hughes rolled in his most improbable birdie to an enormous roar, pulling into a tie with Im at 5 under.

US Olympic group relies on facts to deal with virus

DENVER (AP)—It's a spreadsheet that covers 52 sports and nearly six dozen—a laundry list of places around the globe where Olympic hopefuls were expected to be competing over the next few months.

With the threat of coronavirus hanging over the Tokyo Olympics, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee has been gath-

ering information from the individual sports about their pre-Olympic schedules—what events have been cancelled, moved or postponed, and what other events could be in the future.

There are no specific backup plans being made, the USOPC officials say, but it's a good list to have, as the Olympic qualifying season gears up and

athletes start punching tickets for what they hope will be a trip to Japan. The marathon trials, for instance, are Saturday.

USOPC Chief of Sport Performance Rick Adams says in addition to collecting the logistical information, the federation is working closely with the Centers for

Disease Control and the Department of Homeland Security to get every update about coronavirus, how it is spreading and what can be done to avoid it.

Adams and others at the USOPC are keeping tabs on the headlines—IOC president Thomas Bach on Thursday said all plans are



Saipan Marathon offline registration deadline Friday

Online registration for Saipan Marathon 2020 will be closed on March 14, but CNMI/U.S. registrants may register in person at the Marianas Visitors Authority office in San Jose, Saipan until Mar. 6 at 5pm.

For CNMI and U.S. residents, registration fee for full Marathon is \$55 and \$45 for the half marathon/10K/5K, while students with valid ID will pay only \$30.

Saipan Marathon is an annual signature event of the MVA aimed at drawing visitors and media attention to the destination. This year's event adds a 5K course.

"So far, we have hundreds already signed up for the marathon, and we invite CNMI

residents and U.S. registrants to take advantage of these last few days to register and join all the fun and festivities on March 14," said lead event coordinator and MVA Community Projects specialist Ed Diaz.

Powerade returns this year as exclusive sponsor, while Skymark Airlines, which provides direct daily flights from Tokyo to Saipan, is a platinum sponsor, along with IT&E. Hyatt Regency Saipan has signed on as a gold sponsor, and silver sponsors are Budget Car Rental Saipan, Coca-Cola/Foremost, Grandvrio Resort Saipan, Saipan Apparel, Saipan Plant Center, and Subway. Supporters

include Northern Marianas Athletics, Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Memorial Park, Dept. of Public Safety, Dept. of Public Works, Dept. of Fire and Emergency Services, Div. of Parks and Grounds, and Hawaiian Rock Products.

Saipan Marathon is certified by the International Association of Athletic Federations through the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races.

Valid photo ID is required to register. Registration fees include the awards banquet, a finishers T-shirt, and a certificate of completion.

The race will start and end at the American Memorial Park. The full marathon will kick off at 4:30am; 5:30am is for the half marathon; 5:45am for the 10K; and at 6am for the 5K. The cut-off time for the full marathon will be 8:30am at the halfway point. There is no cut-off time for the other courses.

All competitors are required to pick up their race packets on March 13 at the AMP from 3pm to 4pm for team/groups/tour groups/etc. and from 4pm to 6pm for individuals.

For more information, visit The Marianas Calendar at www.mymarianas.com or contact Diaz at 1-670-664-3210 or ediaz@mymarianas.com. (MVA)

JSN

From Page 24

throws, and Jun Alipio, Randy Mungcal, and Ferdie Tobias combined for 18 markers.

Old Iskool collapsed in the fourth frame, as it had no player making more than two field goals in the last 10 minutes of play. James Abuy scored the two baskets for Old Iskool.

Mungcal top-scored for JSN with his 16 points, while Jun Tabora added 13. Ed Pangalinan paced Old Iskool with his 13 markers, but was scoreless in the final quarter.

In the other semis match, Blue Haus dominated IT&E in the second half, which started with the latter still in the game, as the former led by only 6 at the break, 37-31.

When the duel resumed, Erol Peredo took over for Blue Haus, scoring 11 points in the third period to lift his team to a 61-47 advantage. Tony Diaz backed up Peredo, delivering 8 of his 12 markers in that crucial canto.

Peredo then kept going in the fourth period, adding 8 more markers, while the rest of his teammates also hit the

board to bring Blue Haus to the finals.

Blue Haus will come into winner-take-all finale this Sunday undefeated. Blue Haus swept its nine games in the regular season before topping IT&E in the semis game last weekend. JSN finished the elimination with a 7-2 record, losing the tiebreak for the No. 2 spot with Old Iskool.

First Game

JSN 70—Mungcal 16, J. Tabora 13, Alegre 9, Wesley 7, Garcia 6, D. Tabora 6, Alipio 4, Jarop 3, Tobias 2,

Ocampo 2.

Old Iskool 62—Pangalinan 13, Grimpula 12, Camacho 12, Montano 10, Abuy 7, De Guzman 5, Tolentino 3.

Scoring by quarters: 13-11, 28-30, 43-49, 70-62.

Second Game

Blue Haus 82—Peredo 24, Guiab 16, Esdrelon 14, T. Diaz 12, Santos 6, E. Diaz 6, Culala 4.

IT&E 70—Lerio 22, G. Masga 17, Joyner 8, Poquiz 8, D. Masga 6, Tenorio 5, Viola 2, Bucalig 2.

Scoring by quarters: 19-13, 37-31, 61-47, 82-70.

KANOA

From Page 24

former found the back of the net. Jaydee Jose then wrapped things up for Kanoa with his conversion in the 70th minute.

With the victory, Kanoa took the solo lead in the division, while TanHoldings fell to the No. 2 spot.

In the other game, MP United forced a 1-1 draw against Matansa.

Andrew Chung registered the equalizer in the 63rd minute, while Jose Rafael Lopez logged the first goal in the match, as he gave Matansa the precarious lead in the 50th minute.

GIRLS U17 TanHoldings 6, Kanoa 3

TanHoldings and Kanoa also crossed paths in the girls U17 game last Saturday evening with the former prevailing.

Jannah Casarino and Kai-



Kanoa Football Club's Markus Toves, left, tries to keep the possession against two TanHoldings Football Club defenders during the second half of their boys U16 division game in the 2020 NMIFA Spring Youth League last Saturday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

thlyn Chavez fired two goals apiece to give TanHoldings a 2-0-0 win-draw-loss record and the lead in the division. Katrina Costales and Rizza

Relucio chipped in one goal apiece, while Khristelle Itaas, Sharmaine Francisco, and Irish Benig scored for Kanoa, which is still search-

ing for a win this season.

Kanoa looked good in its duel against TanHoldings before folding up in the second half. Kanoa missed hitting

currently for the Games to go on as scheduled—but not making knee-jerk reactions to the wild fluctuations of the news cycles.

"At this juncture, it's really about being on top of the information, being fact-based, communicating with athletes, NGBs and staying very focused on the preparations for Tokyo," Adams said.

The U.S. will bring more than 500 athletes to the 17-day sports festival in Tokyo, many of whom will go to Asia early to train and acclimate. All the potential Olympians are ramping up their travel—some competing in international events that carry Olympic ramifications, others using overseas competitions as a preseason of sorts in advance of trials that will be held in the U.S. over the summer.

Four years ago, with the Zika scare in full bloom in the run-up to the Rio Games, the USOPC improved upon its protocols in case an illness spread quickly, either before or during the Olympics.

It has access to a state-of-the-art testing system that can identify infectious diseases and possibly prevent their spread. That system, however, is not designed to detect coronavirus.

The USOPC also has extensive quarantine protocols that include sealed-off spaces both inside and outside of the Olympic Village where many of the athletes stay.

The federation's infectious disease advisory group—filled with medical experts from around the country—has been meeting to gather updates about coronavirus.

TAGAMAN

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ippines Fernando Jose Casares and Nikko Huelgas, Bong Jun An, Jin Gu Ha, and Jae Hyun Kim of South Korea, and Hiroyuki Nishiuchi and returning champion Yu Shinozaki of Japan. Seventy-two other bikers have also signed up in the 11 age group divisions in the men's event and several of them are off-island.

Meanwhile, this year's Tagaman women's pro so far has three entries—Guam's Manami Iijima, Japan's Yasue Nakahara, and South Korea's Narae Chung.

Iijima topped last year's women's race to complete a three-peat. She finished the 2-kilometer swim, 60K bike, and 15K run in 3:12:12 to beat fellow Guam bet Laura Nadeau (3:13:18) and the Philippines' Maria Hodges (3:26:13).

Shinozaki ruled the men's field after submitting 2:48:39 and prevailing over Nishiuchi (3:04:05) and Russia's Aleksandr Dorovskikh (3:04:15).

the team standings.

Blas logged her pair of goals in the first half (third and 13th minute) and Southern United went on to post a 3-0 lead, as Deleon Guerrero got her first goal in the 17th minute. MP United averted a first half shutdown when Fiona Bucalig scored in the 18th, however Southern United got the one goal back late in the second half to complete the easy win.

2020 NMIFA Spring Youth League

TEAM STANDINGS (As of March 1, 2020)

BOYS U16 DIVISION

CLUB	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Kanoa	3	0	0	14	5	9	9
TanHoldings	2	0	1	10	10	0	6
Matansa	0	1	2	6	9	-3	1
MP United	0	1	2	3	9	-6	1

GIRLS U17 DIVISION

CLUB	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
TanHoldings	2	0	0	10	3	7	6
Southern United	2	0	1	8	7	1	6
MP United	1	0	1	7	6	1	3
Kanoa	0	0	3	7	16	-9	0



LeBron
outduels Zion
as Lakers beat
Pelicans

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Pats may
get Bengals'
Dalton if
Brady leaves

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE



Kanoa takes third straight win

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Kanoa Football Club extended its winning streak in the boys U16 division of the 2020 NMIFA Spring Youth League after dominating TanHoldings, 6-2, last Saturday morning at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Markus Toves powered Kanoa to its third victory in as many games after making

a hat trick against TanHoldings. He posted his first goal in the 27th minute, while Daniel Mark Pablo knocked in one five minutes earlier to hand Kanoa a 2-0 halftime lead.

Toves scored anew in the 43rd minute, while his older brother, Merrick, hit the board 11 minutes later bringing Kanoa's advantage back to 3, 4-1. TanHoldings got into the



Despite ending its silence, TanHoldings failed to mount a comeback in the second half with Mark Joseph Roque becoming only the second player to score for the losing squad, while Markus got his third goal in the 68th minute, just a minute after the

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO

TanHoldings Football Club's Oliver Fajardo is surrounded by Kanoa Football Club defenders during the first half of their boys U16 division game in the 2020 NMIFA Spring Youth League last Saturday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

JSN, Blue Haus set title duel

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Masters Division of the United Filipino Organization IT&E 2019 Basketball League is down to two teams, as JSN and Blue Haus eliminated their respective foes last Sunday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The No. 3 seed JSN took the first finals seat following a 70-62 semis win over No. 2 Old Iskool, while the top-ranked Blue Haus lived up to expectations after downing JSN went on to turn the tables



No. 4 IT&E in the other Final Four tiff, 82-70. It was a come-from-behind win for JSN, as the eventual finalist faced a 43-49 deficit after three periods.

deficit after three periods. on Old Iskool in the deciding fourth period behind its balance offense. Jun Tabora and Teng Alegre scored 7 points apiece in the payoff canto, Tim Wesley hit five important free

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Tagaman moving ahead, over 100 sign up

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

With this year's Tagaman Triathlon moving ahead as planned, the March 21 race has drawn more than 100

participants, including off-island athletes.

As of yesterday, 107 have registered for the tournament organized by the Triathlon Association of the CNMI in

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Swimmers head to the waters off Kilili Beach to start the competition in last year's Tagaman Triathlon. Amid the coronavirus threat, the March 21 race is still a go.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Blue Haus' Edwin Santos, center, battles IT&E's Dexter Tenorio, left, and Jawn Joyner for the rebound during their semis game in the Masters Division of the United Filipino Organization IT&E 2019 Basketball League last Sunday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.